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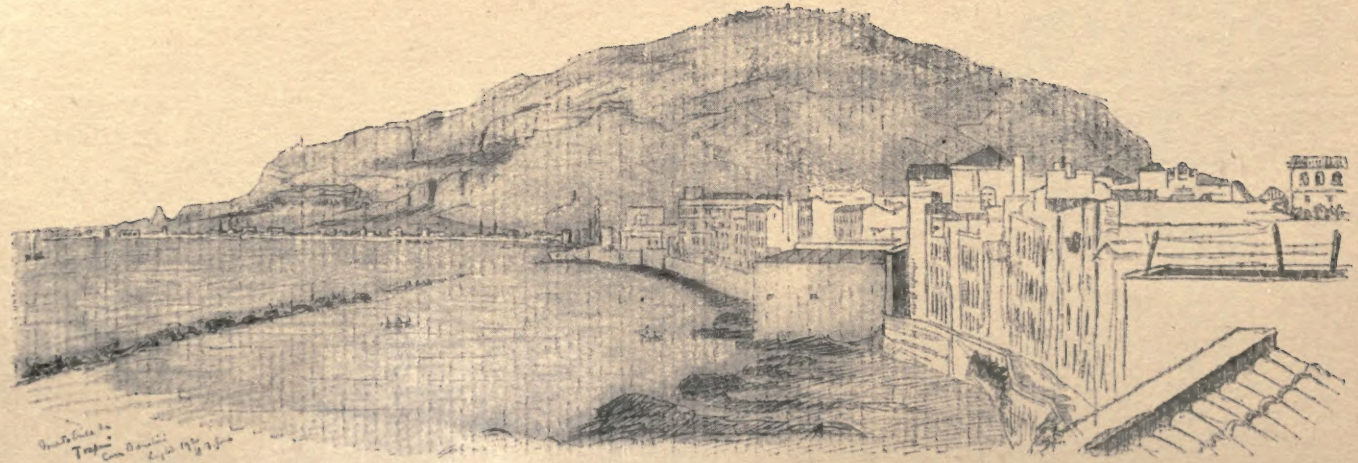
Mount Eryx and other Diversions of Travel

By the Same Author

Samuel Butler : Author of Erewhon : a Memoir. 2 *Volumes*	Macmillan & Co.
Diversions in Sicily.	Jonathan Cape
Castellinaria and other Sicilian Diversions.	„ „
Charles Darwin and Samuel Butler : a Step towards Reconciliation.	„ „
Samuel Butler : a Sketch.	„ „
In collaboration with A. T. BARTHOLOMEW	
The Samuel Butler Collection at St. John's College, Cambridge.	Heffer



H. F. Jones, Del.

MOUNT ERYX FROM TRAPANI.

Burl. Eng. Co., Sc.

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Mount Eryx

and other Diversions of Travel

by Henry Festing Jones

With a frontispiece of Mount Eryx
from a sketch by the Author

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Jonathan Cape
Eleven Gower Street, London

First Published 1921.
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Preface

PART I of this book is in three sections, dated respectively 1903, 1902 and 1912. On the 6th of February, 1920, I read to The Literary Society of The University of London, King's College, Strand, the first section, entitled "Varallo-Sesia," Dr. C. D. Webb being in the chair. On the 14th of October, 1920, I again read the same section to The Women's Institute, 92 Victoria Street, S.W., Mrs. Frank Pownall being in the chair.

Part II of the book is A Tour to Mount Eryx in 1920. So that the two parts of the book are divided by the war, which interrupted and disorganized so many undertakings.

In July, 1921, I went again to Varallo after several years' absence. All Butler's old friends are now dead except Bertoli, the bee-master. He is seventy-eight, in failing health, but still cheery and interested in his bees and in many other topics. I found nothing which caused me to want to alter anything that I have written; but I should like to add that Butler's sketch, which I gave to the town, is now located in the room of the organist on the Sacro Monte. It is signed "S. Butler, Aug^{t} 1871," and shows the old front of the church on the Mountain before Costantino Durio gave them the new facciata. It is the sketch referred to in the text as showing the Resurrection Fountain, and was made from near the stone which is said to be such an exact facsimile of the Stone which was rolled away from the Holy Sepulchre.

It remains for me to thank those who have helped me

with suggestions, copying and correcting proofs, viz., my sister, Lilian, Miss Florence Kathleen Butterworth, Mr. A. T. Bartholomew and Mrs. Johnson of the Metropolitan Typewriting Office, Chancery Lane. I also thank Signora Louise Caico, of Montedoro (Caltanissetta), Sicily, for kindly reading the book in proof and for placing at my disposal her intimate knowledge of Sicilian Ways and Days.

MAIDA VALE.

September, 1921.

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Part 1: Diversions of Travel

Varallo-Sesia

To Miss Florence Margaret Durham

Chapter 1 The Albergo della Posta

IN April, 1903, nearly a year after Butler's death, I went to Varallo-Sesia to give to the town the MS. of his book *Ex Voto*;[1] and a sketch by him made on the Mountain. I had written to Carlo Topini telling him I was coming, and he met me at the station and took me to his hotel, the Albergo della Posta. I produced for him the MS. and the sketch, and he promised to make all arrangements for the presentation. He showed me that on the wall of my bedroom was a framed print of the photograph of Butler, taken by Pizzetta at Varallo in 1889, of which a reproduction appears in *The Humour of Homer*. He showed me also that there was another print of the same photograph hanging in the dining-room, and another in his own private sitting-room.

Butler had often heard of Varallo, and of the Sacro Monte, and of its chapels filled with life-size statues representing scenes from the life of Christ; but he never went there until 1871. He stayed at the Albergo d'Italia where Carlo Topini was then a waiter; he asked for some one to take him up the Mountain and show him round,

[1] *Ex Voto. An Account of the New Jerusalem at Varallo-Sesia with some account of Tabachetti's remaining work at Crea*, by Samuel Butler. Trübner, 1888. *Diary of a journey through North Italy to Sicily in the Spring of* 1903 *undertaken for the purpose of leaving the MSS. of three books by Samuel Butler at Varallo-Sesia, Aci-Reale and Trapani*, by Henry Festing Jones, Cambridge 1904.

and Carlo Topini handed him over to Dionigi Negri who was in the office of the Town Clerk. They spent the day together among the chapels and Dionigi showed him everything. Thus began a friendship which lasted till Butler's death.

During the days of his poverty, that is from about the year 1876, when he lost his money, until 1886 when his father died, Butler used to go for his annual summer holiday to the Canton Ticino, making his head-quarters at Faido in the Val Leventina. He would have preferred spending his time in Italy but, as he could not afford it, he consoled himself by reflecting that Faido was cheap and that the Canton Ticino, although politically forming part of Switzerland, is inhabited by people of Italian descent who speak the Italian language. And nearly every year he managed to nip over into Italy proper for a short excursion before returning to England. He thus became familiar with Varese, Graglia, Oropa and the other Italian holy places described in *Alps and Sanctuaries*, wherein he gives an account of these holidays and excursions. In the opening of that book he apologizes for writing about Italian Sanctuaries and omitting the Sacro Monte at Varallo-Sesia. The omission was not due to neglect ; on the contrary, he often included Varallo in his excursions and renewed his friendship with Dionigi Negri and familiarized himself with the statues and chapels. He omitted Varallo because he considered the Sacro Monte there so important that it required a book all to itself. On his father's death his poverty ceased and from 1886 onwards he was able to travel freely and to stay for as long as he liked in any place he chose to visit.

On the day I arrived in Varallo, Dionigi Negri came to the Albergo della Posta in the evening and apologized for

not meeting my train—he had been in the country all day. We sat round the fire of peat and wood, he and Carlo Topini and I, and they made me take the seat which Butler used to occupy when he was here in January, 1888, photographing the statues in the chapels on the Mountain for his book *Ex Voto*. We laughed as we talked of old times —about how Butler and I had been to Varallo for the festa in commemoration of Gaudenzio Ferrari ; about the religious celebrations in connexion with the new facciata which Costantino Durio gave to the church on the Mountain ; about how we went to Dionigi's vintage at Cavallirio, starting by the train at 4.30 a.m. with his uncle, Zio Paolo, a dear old fellow of seventy-eight, a baker with a shop in the piazza, who came with us and brought a basket containing half a bottle of Xeres which he put up in the rack and left there when he got out of the train ; and we reminded each other how the old gentleman on discovering his loss after we left the train kept on throwing up his hands and exclaiming " Ciao," by which he meant that there was nothing to be done and we must make the best of a bad job. And Dionigi repeated his moral tale about the chapel on the Mountain known as the Repentance of Peter. This contains a statue of Peter sitting below, weeping bitterly, while the cock, perched on a branch above, is in the attitude of crowing. Dionigi's story was that on July 3, 1653, Lorenzo Togni, who had been a martyr to intemperance, came to the Sacro Monte, drunk, but not sufficiently so to be unable to go the round of the chapels. When this cock saw him approaching, he turned round on his perch, flapped his wings severely, and exclaimed in a reproving voice : " Ciocc' anch' anc'uei ? " which is Piemontese dialect for " Drunk again to-day also ? " Lorenzo was

so much affected that he took the pledge and never drank wine again. And the point of the story is that the words "Ciocc' anch' anc'uei?" sound like "Cock-a-doodle-do"; but neither to Butler's nor to my hearing did they so sound. Butler put the legend into *Ex Voto*, taking care to say that it is in neither Fassola nor Torrotti, and my belief is that it sprang originally from Dionigi's brain.

Chapter 2 Bees

NEXT morning I called on Giacomo Bertoli, a watchmaker who is known throughout Europe as a bee-master and sends his honey by parcel post to many different countries. When we were having our Erewhon Dinners at Pagani's, in Great Portland Street, I used to issue invitations to all our friends at Varallo to come, not expecting them to accept but wishing them to know what we were doing in England in memory of Butler. Dionigi, in reply, used to send a pot of Bertoli's honey, and the chef at Pagani's incorporated it in some pudding which formed part of the menu.

Bertoli took me up to his sitting-room for a glass of wine from his own vineyard, and we talked about Butler and old times; and it seemed to me as though the wine did not taste quite as Bertoli's Grignasco used to taste. He sat like a portrait by Rembrandt, the dim light reflected from the houses opposite the window falling on his grey hair and black hat and on the garnets set in little disks of gold which sparkled in his ears. He said he was sixty, but he was as energetic as a man of forty-five, and full of interest in the future of South Africa and in the visit to Rome of King Edward VII.

Bertoli's father used to be organist in the church on the Sacro Monte, but he himself is too fully occupied with his watch-making and his bees to have any time for music.

He says he has a passion for working and so had his mother; it is the only thing he inherited from her, and it is a legacy more lasting than money, more valuable than land; one cannot lose it, or mortgage it, or be robbed of it. His mother worked as hard as any of his bees. There is much man might learn from the bees—temperance, cleanliness and, especially, the love of working. I said that as the bees reminded him of his mother, so they reminded me of Butler, who was also devoted to his work. Here he became modest on behalf of his bees, and said that they made only one kind of honey, whereas Butler produced many kinds of books, besides pictures and music.

"But then," I said, "he was interested in so many different subjects. Now perhaps your bees are not particularly interested in philosophy, are they?"

"No," he replied, "nor in painting, nor music, nor the classics, nor anything but honey."

"You never catch them praying to the Madonna, I imagine."

"They have never even heard of her."

"But they must be familiar with her appearance. I have often noticed them among the figures on the Mountain, for they go right inside the chapels. Why do you suppose they do that?"

"They are attracted by the artificial flowers," replied Bertoli. "They think they are real."

"Oh, that's it, is it? They are trying to get honey out of them. Do they think that they are incidentally fertilizing them?"

"Very likely."

"If they pay attention and understand what is represented in the Chapels of the Annunciation and of the

Nativity, that dogma of the Virgin Birth must rather puzzle them."

Then he saw that I did not know much about the domestic habits of bees and set to work to enlighten me.

There dawns a brilliant morning at Alagna when the queen of the bees goes out from among them. High up she flies, higher and higher, till she is beyond the sight of all on earth, visible only to the eye of heaven. Then something happens the result of which is an increase in the population of the hive. But as to the exact details of the course by which the resulting increase is brought about there have been differences of opinion. It may be that earlier in the development of the bees such differences gave rise to angry disputes, one creed being accepted as orthodox, and heretics being doomed to persecution and martyrdom. Now the bees have got into their groove and know better than to waste time quarrelling over the mysteries. Persecutions and martyrdoms follow in the hive later in the year, but they are decreed for practical reasons connected with the economizing of food. On the return of the queen her subjects are fully occupied. They welcome her with enthusiasm, bow before her, embrace her, ring joy-bells in their hearts and set to work to make preparation.

Man, ceaselessly inquiring and experimenting has discovered, comparatively speaking only yesterday, much that was formerly hidden from him. Bertoli informed me that it is now certain that the queen lays eggs that are fertilized and also eggs that are unfertilized. And he told me a still more curious thing, namely, that the drones, the males, are always produced from eggs that have not been fertilized.

"And thus we see," concluded Bertoli, "that long before

any one thought of the story of the Virgin Birth which is told in those two Chapels of the Annunciation and the Nativity the bees already knew all about parthenogenesis."

But he could not explain how it was possible for unfertilized eggs to produce males. Notwithstanding the advance of science there are still mysteries in nature waiting to be disputed about and explored by inquisitive man.

Bertoli takes his bees up to Alagna for the summer months; but, as it is too cold for them there during the winter, he brings them down in the autumn and keeps them at different places near Varallo. Some were in Varallo itself; some at Voca, above; some at Pietra below. After the last autumn flowers are gone he has to feed them through the winter with a substitute for the honey of which he has robbed them; and as the winter draws to a close he cunningly mixes a little wine with their food so as to stimulate them to go out and look for the earliest blossoms.

Once when I was at Varallo in the spring he was making preparations for conveying his bees up to Alagna, and invited me to come and see him change the lids of two hives in readiness for the journey next day. As soon as the lid was off there were the bees all in a mass moving about on the tops of their rows of empty comb. He advised me to be careful, and I kept at what fortunately turned out to be a safe distance, until he had put on the travelling lid of wire gauze. I thought of what one reads in books published for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge about the intelligence of the lower animals and their recognizing the hand of the Master, and so on, and I said:

"And of course your bees know you?"

He said: "No they don't. They know nothing at all except how to do their work."

But they knew when they were disturbed, and did not like having their lids changed, and got on to his face and neck and hands ; he brushed them off gently, pulled their stings out of his flesh and seemed not to mind. Also they know about the journey and dislike it very much ; they cannot bear the shaking ; they get very angry and have a great deal to say about it. When they arrive at Alagna they are kept shut up for the first night ; if they were let out at once they might fly away. The next day they go out and are careful not to lose themselves ; they spend some time flying round, taking their bearings and noting the position of the hives ; in a few hours they understand all about it and begin working.

He had extracted the honey and given back the empty combs to be refilled ; he called my attention particularly to some of the old combs which were going with the bees up to Alagna.

I said : " Don't they object to being given such brown, dirty-looking comb ? "

He said : " No, they are so pleased to find the comb ready made that they begin to fill it at once."

I saw that one piece of comb had a hole in it big enough to put one's finger through, and I said : " Of course they will first repair that hole ? "

He said : " No they won't ; they left that on purpose, so that they can pass through from one comb to the next. Questa è la loro Piccadilly Street." [That is their Piccadilly Street.]

On parting from him I hoped that his bees would make many more journeys backwards and forwards between Alagna and their winter quarters before the inevitable time comes for him to leave them.

Chapter 3 The Sacro Monte

THE next day Carlo Topini, having completed his preparations, told me that there was to be a meeting at the Municipio at 5 o'clock, and if I would be ready he would take me. This suited me and I went off to spend the intervening time upon the Sacro Monte—that place which the Blessed Bernardino Caimi found to be so like Jerusalem that no other place would do for his purpose, which was to provide a reproduction of scenes in the life of Christ so nearly resembling the actual occurrences themselves, in surroundings so nearly resembling the holy places, that pilgrims to Varallo might consider that they had virtually witnessed the events at Jerusalem itself.

I intended to make the round of the chapels as Butler and I used to make it when we were on the Mountain together, and accordingly began with the first—the Fall of Man. This is taking place in a Zoological Garden of tame wild beasts of the field. The serpent has corkscrewed his length round the trunk of the tree and is supporting his head in a fork of the branches; and certainly the artist has succeeded in making him far more subtle than any of the others. The Adam and the Eve are not the original figures, and the chapel itself has superseded an earlier one with the same subject which stood probably upon another site. (*Ex Voto*, ch. IX.)

This interested Butler, and in writing his book he followed the shifting of the chapels and of the figures as well as his information would permit. He was particularly interested in the fate of the old Adam and Eve, which Dionigi told us had been removed from their original positions and occupations and were now located in chapel no. 23 where, dressed in the uniform of Roman soldiers, they were assisting at the capture of Christ. We thought of Mrs. Jarley and of how she conciliated the favour of the boarding-schools by altering the face and costume of some of her waxworks so that

> Mary Queen of Scots, in a dark wig, white shirt collar and male attire, was such a complete image of Lord Byron that the young ladies quite screamed when they saw it.

And we were not satisfied about the Roman soldiers until we had investigated them thoroughly, confirmed the report, and settled beyond dispute which had formerly been Adam and which Eve.

The present statues in the first chapel are by Tabachetti. The Adam has been restored and in the process has had his hair and beard so trimmed, oiled, and brushed that he looks more likely to become the father of a race of barbers' dummies than of men; but the Eve is one of the most beautiful figures ever modelled and looks capable of correcting and overcoming the defects of Adam. It is Eve that one remembers. Nevertheless the beauty of Eve is only a part of what the tellers of the story intended us to remember. God, having made the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, made man with a desire to taste of its fruit, and endowed him also with a power to resist this desire. He then placed him in the garden, called his attention to the Tree and told him that if he yielded to the desire to eat

of the fruit he should surely die. In this chapel we see Eve offering and Adam receiving the apple.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband, and he did eat.

When I was at school, and my spiritual adviser was preparing me for confirmation, I inquired of him why man should surely die as a consequence of yielding to the desire to eat of the fruit. It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves. Why did He not make man's power to resist stronger, or his desire to yield weaker? He is omniscient and therefore must have foreseen the catastrophe which, being omnipotent, He could have averted. It seemed to me that He had intended it; and consequently that if any one were to be punished it ought to be God and not Man. My spiritual adviser was angry with me and accused me of arrogance. This startled me, for I did not feel arrogant; I was curious about the apparent injustice and wanted an explanation. It was as though he had told me that two and two made five this time and, on my begging him to tell me the reason for the new regulation, he had turned upon me and demanded what I meant by presuming to doubt his word. He must have observed that I was upset by his treatment of the difficulty, for he softened, laid his hand upon my shoulder and said solemnly:

"My dear boy, these things are a mystery."

Which I already knew. That was why they had puzzled me. I knew also that if I was to be prepared for confirmation on the approaching Whitsun Monday it would never do to waste time upon mysteries the solution of which was not included in the programme. So I was

silent. I have since suspected that my spiritual adviser was as much puzzled as I was—and if so, I do not blame him.

It does not matter now; and, just as at school the day of my appointment with my bishop was getting imminent, so, here on the Mountain, there was not too much time to go round the chapels before I should have to be ready for my landlord and his appointment with the municipal authorities. And now here was Battista, the custode, coming along. I might have saved time by avoiding him, for he seemed to have forgotten me, but he was an old friend; so I stopped him, saying nothing, merely looking at him and waiting. He did not respond. I tried prompting him by asking his name; and, at the sound of my voice, a look of recognition stole into his face. We talked of Butler and of old times, and of how we used to get him to unlock the chapels for us so that we might go in and take photographs and make notes of the figures; and of how he used to grumble because he had to leave us to go and ring the bell for those "blessed benedictions." He told me he was seventy-nine, a year older than Zio Paolo, and in very good health with nothing to complain of except that his eyesight was becoming a little "turbid." So that was it; he had not forgotten me; he had not seen me. I accompanied him to his house and talked to his passero solitario (the blue rock thrush) which was hanging in a cage by his door, until I had to hurry off and find Carlo Topini.

Chapter 4

The Second Municipal Dinner

I GOT down to the Albergo della Posta in time, and at a few minutes before five we started. I carried the MS. of *Ex Voto*, and we were preceded by a boy carrying a box which contained the sketch. This sketch shows the church on the Mountain as it was before Costantino Durio gave them their new facciata. Butler sat in the piazza to make it. He also made another sketch in the piazza, and one of the sketches shows the figure of the Risen Christ which stands over the fountain, but I cannot now remember which. I gave the other one to the Avvocato Negri of Casale-Monferrato, who is deeply interested in the Sacro Monte. While at work on these sketches or one of them, Butler had the interview referred to on p. 232 of *Ex Voto* when "a most excellent and lovable old priest," who wanted to convert him, showed him the stone on the Mountain which is said to be such an exact facsimile of the one rolled in front of the Holy Sepulchre that no pilgrim who looks upon it can ever after entertain a doubt of the historical accuracy of any item of the story displayed in the chapels.

At the Municipio we had speeches, one from Pietro Galloni [1] the Amministratore del Sacro Monte, who told

[1] Galloni is the author of *Sacro Monte di Varallo Origine e Svolgimento delle Opere d'Arte* (Varallo, G. Zanfa, 1914).

us that Butler had given to him all his right and interest in Angelo Rizzetti's translation into Italian of *Ex Voto* in trust for the Administration of the Sacro Monte, and he now handed over the MS. of the translation as a gift to the town, together with all letters and documents relating to it.

Then I produced the MS. of *Ex Voto* and the sketch and, my Italian not being very fluent, Carlo Topini addressed the meeting for me. He told them that Butler on his death-bed had expressed the wish that the MS. and the sketch should be given to the town. This was not true—at least it was not the fact. I'm a bit of a story-teller myself, but in this matter I had not strayed from the naked facts. Butler on his death-bed was too much occupied with other things to express any wish about the MS. or the sketch; the idea of giving them to the town had arisen in conversation between Streatfeild, Butler's literary executor, and myself; we both felt sure that he would have approved. And this was what I had instructed Carlo Topini to say. He had, however, undertaken the affair, so I left him to carry it through in his own way. Afterwards I asked him about his speech. He replied that he was addressing an Italian audience, and was sure that they would understand better what was intended if he decanted it out of my British, matter-of-fact way of putting it into the more picturesque one of a death-bed message. Then I saw how right he was. For words are but forms wherein spiritual meanings may be conveyed from one man to another, and no meaning will pass unless the form is acceptable to the mental habits and intelligence of the audience. He did not suppose that our municipal friends would treat his statement as historically accurate; they would take his words in a

Pickwickian sense and construe them accordingly. If I had interfered and corrected the fact I should have risked obscuring the truth. So I was content to acquiesce in the birth of another legend which might live its little life bracketed with Dionigi's moral tale about Lorenzo Togni and the Repentance of Peter.

All those present at the meeting in the Municipio were much pleased to have both the MS. and the sketch ; and I had some difficulty in making them understand that they were a free gift, and that neither Butler's family nor his friends expected any payment for them. The sindaco considered this most generous, for he thought that they might have been sold for a great deal of money. He promised that they should be preserved in perpetuity with the greatest care among the most precious archives of the Municipio. The proceedings then terminated by his inviting me to dine with them that evening.

Accordingly, that evening there was a municipal dinner at the Albergo della Posta. I was all the time thinking of that other dinner given by the Municipio to Butler, in 1887, at the albergo on the Sacro Monte in the open loggia there, which he used to speak of as the most beautiful dining-room in Europe. I am sure that all of us who had been present at the previous dinner were thinking of it, and of how there had been twenty-six persons there, including the Procuratore del Re, the Sotto Prefetto, the Direttore del Sacro Monte and other great people. At this second dinner in the Albergo della Posta I was put in the seat of honour as the guest of the evening, with the sindaco on one side of me and Pietro Galloni on the other ; and Dionigi Negri and Zio Paolo were among the guests. We had no speeches, that had all been done at

the Municipio in the morning; but we talked about old times. Dionigi said to me:

"Do you remember the speeches at the banquet on the Mountain?"

"Yes," I replied, "and how well Butler spoke."

"And you spoke, too," said he with a twinkle.

"I wonder at your referring to that, Dionigi," I replied. "You promised that I should not be called upon to speak and then proposed the health of England, mentioning my name so that I was obliged to return thanks."

"Ah," he said, "but you did not make a long speech. I remember every word. You said: 'Gentlemen, England is much obliged to you for the kind manner in which you have drunk her health.'"

"Well; there was nothing more to say," I answered. "Besides, it made them laugh. And do you remember our visit before dinner to the Capture of Christ chapel?"

"Yes, and how disgracefully you behaved," he replied, "pulling up the uniforms of those two soldiers and exposing their nakedness."

"You must admit," I said, "that it is better to know. Fortunately they had not retained their fig-leaves, if they ever had any; and now there will never be any question as to which was the old Adam and which the old Eve."

"Oh I'm not complaining," said Dionigi.

"Anyhow," I continued, "that banquet was a very good idea of yours; it was an inspiration; it came at the right moment."

"How do you mean—at the right moment?"

"Why, Butler's father was recently dead and he had

become his own master. Except for his articles in *The Universal Review*, which form a kind of codicil to his books about evolution, he had written all he had to say on that subject and was in the mood to embark upon something fresh. He was contemplating, if he had not already begun, his life of Dr. Butler, and, if he had become absorbed in that before you pushed him into writing *Ex Voto*, he might have deferred doing so for good; so that we owe the book to you and your banquet."

"And the MS. of the book Varallo owes to you."

I returned his bow and continued: "There is another thing. He had been making his holiday head-quarters in the Canton Ticino for years, during which he had been in constant money difficulties and in perpetual trouble with his father. Even when there was no family row actually proceeding, and no financial storm actually raging, he used to go out, day after day, with his sketching things, wondering how long the calm would last. The Val Leventina was peopled from the Hospice on the S. Gottardo down to the Lago Maggiore with the ghosts of anxiety and unhappiness of which he did not want to be constantly reminded now that his father was dead. He was glad to have a reason for breaking new ground and coming here to write a book on a new subject."

"Ah! yes," replied Dionigi. "He was like Francesca da Rimini in the Paradiso. 'Nessun maggior dolore.' She also proved that when you are happy there is no greater sorrow than to remember past misery."

"No, no," interrupted the sindaco, who had been listening and who took Dionigi seriously. "It is the other way round; she is not in the Paradiso, she is in the Inferno." And he quoted the passage in full. "She is informing Dante and reminding Virgil that there is no

greater sorrow than, when in misery, to remember past happiness."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Dionigi. "I have a picture of her speaking the words you have quoted, and she is certainly in the Paradiso—at least she is in the arms of Paolo. She never could have said she was in the Inferno while she was in his arms." And he appealed to me.

"It was not polite of her, Dionigi, I admit; but I am afraid the sindaco is right. All the same, your view raises an interesting question. Which is the greater sorrow—(*a*) that present misery should be intensified by the remembrance of past happiness; or (*b*) that present happiness should be blighted by the remembrance of past misery?"

Dionigi said he had no doubt as to the correct answer to that question, and the sindaco said so too. But as the same spiritual meaning may be conveyed in different forms of words, so the same form of words may be used to convey different spiritual meanings; and it was evident that Dionigi and the sindaco each retained his own opinion. Not wishing either of them to think that I disagreed with him I recommended that the problem should be submitted to a committee of Dante experts.

Thus we talked and laughed and drank our Barolo; and it seemed to me that the wine did not taste quite as Carlo Topini's Barolo used to taste. Before the evening drew to a close I found myself wondering whether we had not been making a mistake in attempting to reconstitute the past with so much trivial detail and such a complete absence of Butler, the irreplaceable soul of the previous banquet. We were as ghouls violating the tomb wherein our memories ought to have been left in repose, and the atmosphere of the room became charged with depression.

But we none of us said anything about this to one another; on the contrary, when we broke up I told the sindaco that I was sure Butler would be gratified if he could know what we had been doing in memory of him, and that on my return to England I should inform his family and friends all about the events of the day. And in saying good-night I had to promise that I would return in the autumn early enough for Dionigi's vintage at Cavallirio, and lose another basket of Xeres with Zio Paolo.

Chapter 5 The Chapels

I DID not literally redeem my promise to return to Varallo the next autumn, but I did go again another autumn. I called on Zio Paolo the first evening, and he appeared delighted to see me.

"You will have to stay at least three weeks this time," he said, "because you have promised to lose another basket of Xeres in going to Cavallirio again for the vintage, and the grapes are not ripe yet."

I could not stay so long as that, and I don't suppose he really wanted me to do so. I promised, however, to manage better another year, and was forgiven. We drank a glass of Xeres together and sat in the old gentleman's room smoking and talking. And it seemed to me that Zio Paolo's Xeres did not taste as I am sure that Xeres which we lost would have tasted.

Next morning I went up the Mountain and entered the precincts of the New Jerusalem. There is one spot from which in clear weather a bit of Monte Rosa is visible, but on this autumn morning all the mountain-tops were hidden by clouds. There was no wind, and the stillness was full of a faint aromatic pungency from burning leaves. The sodden flower-beds still showed a little melancholy candytuft, a head of clover here and there, and a marigold or two still in bloom. Wild clematis was stifling the naked shrubs with its autumnal

fluffiness, and the steps leading up to the chapels were red with fallen rowan berries. Bertoli's bees, already brought down from Alagna, were busily gleaning such drops of honey as could still be won from the dying flowers, and hovering inquisitively over the few buds which had not yet given up the hope of blooming into last roses of summer. Perhaps those very bees had fertilized the honesty blossoms and brought about the seeds which I saw hanging on the plants—seeds which the people in Dorset call Money-in-both-pockets and people in France call La Monnaie du Pape. The leaves from the trees and bushes had littered the paths; the pelting rain had beaten them flat; the sun had dried them and curled them up; the wind had blown them into drifts, and a girl was sweeping them into a basket, carrying them away on her back to feed the bonfire, and coming again for more. The fine, velvety soil where they had lain was patterned with the stains of their forms, and printed with the lines of their delicate veining.

These flower-beds were near the chapel of Christ before Herod which contains two laughing boys, but I did not look at them then. I wanted to go round all the chapels and take Herod and his laughing boys in their proper order. I returned, therefore, to the first chapel and began again the tour which had been interrupted in the spring. There was Eve still offering and Adam still accepting the apple, and I thought again of my spiritual adviser and of his turning my question and silencing me by saying that these things were a mystery. I was only about fifteen at the time; and now, looking upon Eve, I wondered whether in making his accusation of arrogance he may not have been resorting to the device of the red-herring—raising a side issue down which he might escape

and thus avoid a troublesome discussion. He may have feared that I should next ask him whether the framers of the story perhaps intended Eve, rather than the apple, when they spoke of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as something not to be tasted. At the age of fifteen one is not up to the tricks of symbolism, and at no age is it easy to be certain of the particular sense in which the symbolist intends his statements to be interpreted. The work in this first chapel was entrusted to Tabachetti and, whatever instructions the Blessed Bernardino Caimi may have given to the original artist, there can be no doubt as to what Tabachetti was thinking of. He has left the apple to take care of itself and has concentrated all his skill upon Eve, making her very pleasant to the eyes and more to be desired than bushels of greengrocery.

The Fall of Man is the prologue. It is the story of Paradise Lost and states the problem of which the remaining chapels present the solution in the story of Paradise Regained. Nothing more is wanted from the Old Testament, accordingly we go at once to the Annunciation. The second chapel, in which the angel Gabriel is foretelling the mystery of the Virgin Birth, is offered as an exact reproduction of the Santa Casa, the actual dwelling of the Madonna, which was miraculously carried by angels from Nazareth to Loreto where it now is.

Then comes the Salutation; and this is followed by the First Vision of S. Joseph. He is sitting, leaning back in his chair, fast asleep, with his thumb stuck in his belt, and an overwhelming angel is appearing to him. So deep is he plunged in slumber that one instinctively turns to the angel to beg him to make less noise in bursting through the wall of the chamber lest he may wake him. I may

have confused the two visions of Joseph ; I think, however, that in this first vision the angel is telling him not to fear to take Mary to be his wife. But Mary knows nothing about the angel or the message. She is sitting in the background, an image of tranquillity, with a pillow on her lap, as deeply absorbed in her needlework as Joseph is in his slumber.

This is followed by the chapel containing the Visit of the Magi. They have been led by a tarnished gilt star which is hung up under a small glazed lantern.

The sixth chapel is the Presepio—the Manger—and contains the Nativity—the fulfilment of Gabriel's Annunciation. This Manger, as Butler says, is more a grotto than a chapel, and is declared in an inscription, set up by Bernardino Caimi, to be " the exact counterpart of the one at Bethlehem in which the Virgin gave birth to her Divine Son." I wished the Baby many happy returns of the day and passed on.

But I do not propose to take the reader into all the chapels. I paused before the Massacre of the Innocents with its confusion of horrified, grief-stricken mothers ; of brutal, overbearing murderers ; of suffering, mutilated children. And I refreshed my memory of the Temptation in the Wilderness, which represents the Devil offering Christ a few real stones to be made bread, the wilderness being another Zoological Gardens with a town frescoed on the not distant background. And among the frescoes we see the Devil at a later moment when, having failed, he has apparently cast himself down from the exceeding high mountain, and is rocketing about in the sky and exploding freely in different directions as he falls through the air.

I particularly inspected the chapel containing the Last

Supper, not because, as Butler says (*Ex Voto*, ch. XI.), "the whole scene is among the least successful on the Sacro Monte," but because I wanted to make a note of the menu; I only remembered the supper in a general way as an indigestible spread. The disciples have sat down to some fish and to an especially prominent cray-fish; they have eggs, cheese, bread, apples, figs and pears, all somewhat damaged and all, like Eve's apple, modelled in terra cotta or plaster and properly coloured. Their raisins are real, and are going mouldy; their wine is also apparently real—Grignolino perhaps, or Barbera, or some other local red wine; and I wondered how long it had been there in its uncorked bottles and how it tasted. There is a plaster sweet of some kind, and some unrecognizable things, probably intended for more fruit. The figures, or at least some of them, wear their napkins over one shoulder and knotted under the other arm, like scarves; and, if I remember right, Christ is in the act of giving the sop to Judas.

I forget how long Mendelssohn stayed in front of the Venus de' Medici when he was in Florence; the passage is in his Letters from Italy; it was something like two hours, I think. But then, as Butler used to say, he did stay such a long while before things. I endeavoured to out-Mendelssohn Mendelssohn in the length of time I stayed in front of two of the chapels. One was Tabachetti's great Journey to Calvary. And here I remembered the difficulty we used to have, when in among the crowd of figures, making photographs, to avoid breaking their fingers as we moved about. The other was Gaudenzio's Crucifixion, the climax of the story.

I saluted the statue of the Vecchietto who is reverently watching in the chapel of the Deposition from the Cross.

I glanced at the Risen Christ over the fountain in the middle of the piazza. I found the facsimile of the stone that was rolled in front of the Holy Sepulchre, and remembered how Butler had terminated his conversation with the "most excellent and lovable old priest" by smiling "politely but inexorably." I glanced at Costantino Durio's discordant new facciata. I looked down on Varallo sleeping below where the Mastallone falls into the Sesia. I paid a visit to Battista and his passero solitario. And I met the man who goes about as Gianduja.

Gianduja is the Mask of Turin and the neighbourhood. It would take too long to reproduce here a résumé of all that has been written about the Masks (Le Maschere). Every important town in Italy has one, and with some of them we are familiar in England. They are the characters of the Harlequinade of the London Pantomimes and of the Punch and Judy of our streets. In Paris, also, we have most of us seen Pierrot, who is another. Not long ago we Londoners invented a Mask for ourselves in the person of Ally Sloper. I say "invented" because I believe he was not an imitation, he was a native growth and sprang up to supply a want. He took his place on the stage with those whom we transplanted here from Italy and appeared in the Harlequinades. He used to appear also, simultaneously, in a private box and to watch the performance in company with his family and friends. I also often saw him going about the streets in a cab and sitting in the outer office of the comic paper which was named after him. The demand for him would appear to have failed; at least it is a long time now since I have seen him anywhere, whereas the demand for Le Maschere in Italy remains insistent.

The Chapels

Gianduja is usually on the Mountain when it is a festa. It was not a festa, however, on this occasion, which probably explained why he had no ballads for sale and why he was not wearing all his correct costume. He wore his knee-breeches with buckles to his shoes, also his Gianduja waistcoat and his periwig with the tail sticking out; but his bowler hat and his ordinary tweed coat of modern cut discorded with all this eighteenth-centuriness as much as Costantino Durio's new facciata discorded with the other buildings on the Mountain. We exchanged a few words and he told me that he had come up to meet his cousin, with whom he had to settle a matter of business in preparation for the festa next week, and that he would then appear properly dressed, with plenty of ballads, and hoped to make a good thing of it.

I had got back to the flower-beds again and happened to meet him just outside the chapels of Herod and Caiaphas where the laughing boys are. They are near the small chapel containing the Repentance of Peter, and I thought that Gianduja would be the man to solve my difficulty about the sound of the cock-crow. I was not surprised to find that he knew all about Lorenzo Togni—legends flourish at Varallo. I asked him whether he, being something of an actor, could so imitate a cock's crow as to make it sound like "Ciocc' anch' anc'uei?" He was surprised that I should have failed to see the similarity, and did his best. But I was still unsatisfied, and could only suppose that I had met with another illustration of how difficult it is for those of one nation to appreciate another nation's humour. So I gave him a cigarette, wished him good luck, and made my way towards the albergo on the Mountain.

Chapter 6 An Elementary Principle

AS I went along I found myself wondering at Gianduja's recklessness in allowing himself to be seen upon his pitch in such an incomplete version of his costume. There were not many pilgrims about, but none of them could have taken him for the real Gianduja in that bowler hat and tweed coat; and he was risking their telling the others next week, when he came to the festa, that he was only an actor dressed up. It may be that too much familiarity with the means of creating an illusion breeds contempt for the result, or it may be that, as he was an artist, he knew that in art there is such a thing as false realism. The Blessed Bernardino Caimi must have known it. He confessed that he had only got a mere facsimile of the Stone that was rolled away from the Holy Sepulchre. He contented himself with only a reproduction of the Santa Casa instead of trying to induce the angels to fly over to Varallo bearing the original building from Loreto. He presented only a counterpart of the Presepio, instead of bringing the actual Manger from Bethlehem, or wherever it is said to be.

Years ago when that learned old contrapuntist, William Smith Rockstro, was trying to teach Butler and me some of the secrets of his art, he allowed me to bring to him for

criticism the music I was composing for a comic opera. The work never came to anything. It was about King Henry VIII and his six queens who were, for the purposes of the opera, married to him contemporaneously ; and it contained a scene in which the six milliners of the queens entered with their unpaid accounts and recited their demands in the form of a solicitor's letter, concluding thus :

"... And unless or on before Wednesday next we receive a substantial remittance on account, we shall have no alternative but to take such proceedings for the recovery of the whole amount as we may be advised."

Rockstro disapproved of the music I proposed for this passage. "You can't have that," he exclaimed.

"Why not ?" I asked. "There are no fifths in it."

"I know there are not," he admitted ; "but you can't have that there. Why, it is : 'We beseech thee to hear us Good Lord !'"

"Yes," I said, "that's all right, isn't it ?"

"No, it's not all right. I am not objecting because of the irreverence, though something might be said on that ground. I am objecting because it is contrary to one of the fundamental principles of art. You may make them intone their claim, if you like ; but you must not quote Tallis in Comic Opera. Even in Grand Opera, when the great masters want antique religious music, they do not lift a passage out of Palestrina with a pair of scissors and paste it into their score. It would be mixing styles."

"I'm sure I've heard something like that done," I said.

"Like it, yes ; but not that. Don't you see how it must clash with the rest ? It can only throw the whole

opera out of gear. What they do is to compose a passage in imitation of Palestrina, sufficiently like the original for the audience to recognize what is intended; but not music which is actually used in church."

Rockstro never escaped down side issues, nor did he ever take refuge behind these things being a mystery. But then he was a master of his subject.

The blessed Bernardino Caimi was respecting this fundamental principle of art when he admitted, or rather insisted, that the Stone, the Santa Casa, and the Presepio on the Mountain are only copies. If the originals had been brought to Varallo they would have clashed with all the other things there which are obviously copies and the whole scheme, like the opera of the incompetent musician, would have been thrown out of gear. And so Gianduja loses nothing by openly admitting that he is no more the real Mask of Turin come to life than the grotto of the Nativity is the real Presepio come from Bethlehem.

Chapter 7 The Maker of Ballads

WHEN I reached the albergo, I took my seat at a table in the open loggia and greeted the landlady, the widow of Carlo Topini's brother, the late landlord. She naturally remembered all about the banquet given to Butler in 1887 in this same loggia ; and we laughed together as we talked over old times. I told her that I had observed some honesty in seed among the flower-beds, and asked if she could give me any to take with me and plant in my garden in London. She was pleased at my request, and, saying that she had some in her own garden much better, sent her girl off to gather seeds from it for me. Then she busied herself about my luncheon.

There was a gentleman at another table ; he had finished his meal and, seeing me talking to the landlady, brought his coffee over to my table, sat down and entered into conversation.

" Where do you come from ? " inquired the gentleman.

" I come from London," I replied.

" London," he said meditatively. " Let me see ; yes. That is a province of Russia, I believe."

" We consider it to be the capital of England," I replied.

"England!" he exclaimed in some surprise. "Then you are what they call a Spaniard. Signor Costantino Durio, who gave the beautiful new facciata to the church, made his money in your country."

What ought I to have said? I knew that business relations existed between Varallo and Spain—that was why Zio Paolo drank Xeres—and I knew that Costantino Durio had made his money at Barcelona. But was it my business to teach geography to the gentleman? I thought not. So I did not correct him nor refuse to assist at the birth of another legend, as harmless as the one about Butler's death-bed instructions, which had come to life down at the Municipio in the spring. As I had not allowed the Municipio to be deceived then, so I was not really allowing the gentleman to be deceived now. He had grasped the information that I was a foreigner, though he had taken it in a general and incorrect form; but if I had attempted to correct the unessential fact, which related to what variety of foreigner I was, I might easily have shaken his faith in the essential truth that I was a foreigner of some kind. Perhaps I ought to have made an attempt. Perhaps I was growing callous. I was certainly tired. Butler in *Ex Voto* speaks of there being forty-five chapels on the Sacro Monte, and I had looked into all of them that morning. Besides I was hungry. I wanted my luncheon and felt unequal to making the effort necessary to convince the gentleman that England and Spain are not synonyms for the same country. It would have been difficult to know where to begin. So I turned to the hors d'œuvres which the landlady had placed before me.

The gentleman recommended particularly the celery. He said: "This is the plant from which was distilled

that juice which Socrates drank and died. You have heard of Socrates? He was a Greek philosopher who carried a lantern and went about searching for an honest man. Also he learnt the mandoline at the age of ninety, and when they said: 'Why, you are too old to be learning the mandoline,' he replied, 'Not at all; surely it is better to die knowing how to play the mandoline than ignorant.' And one day when he was asleep on a grassy bank an eagle mistook his bald head for a tortoise and dropped a stone on it."

"Then he did not die of the poison?" I asked.

"Yes," he explained, "the stone did not kill him. It was the poison that killed him. But you need not be afraid. I have eaten some celery myself, and it has done me no harm. You would have to distil the produce of acres and acres of it to make enough poison to kill either of us."

I ate some celery, but it was stringy. In England we say that celery is no good until after the first frost, and there had been no frost yet in Varallo. Bertoli might have brought his bees down from Alagna, but it was still too early for Dionigi's vintage. I did not tell the gentleman this. I ate the peperoni, the anchovies, the salame, the olives, the radishes, the butter, and left him to form any ideas he chose as to which I liked best. The landlady came bearing the next dish, and saying:

"I have made you a risotto with chickens' livers, because I remember that our dear Mr. Butler was very fond of it."

I did not remember that Butler was particularly fond of it, but I like it very much myself, so I said: "That's right, thank you; I'm sure it will be delicious. And you have coloured it with marigolds from the flower-beds on the Mountain."

I said this partly because I wished to impress the gentleman with the fact that, whatever kind of foreigner I might be, I was familiar with the customs of North Italy; but the landlady replied that she had used saffron. Then, to justify myself in the eyes of the gentleman, who was listening attentively, I told her that when Butler and I were at S. Maria in Calanca, the old priest there had shewn us his store of dried marigold florets, and assured us that he always used them to colour his risotto.

"Ah, yes," she replied, "but in the country they cannot always get saffron."

Thus one is led astray when generalizing from insufficient data. But I did not mind; I was beginning to feel better; the luncheon was restoring me. The gentleman began talking again, recalling more fragments of the past.

"And there was another famous Greek, named Ulysses, who was wrecked on the island of Malta. You have heard of Malta? and of Ulysses? He was thrown up in a bay there which is still called by his name. He made a fire to warm himself and a snake came out and bit him. But he took the snake by the neck and crushed it dead. It would have been a pity if he had been killed, for he was a very handsome man, tall, with long hair, and a great traveller. I will now leave you. I have an appointment to meet my cousin."

"Is your cousin on the Mountain?" I inquired.

"Yes," he replied. "I dare say you met him. He is Gianduja. I write his ballads for him. I shall find him waiting for me in front of the Ecce Homo chapel. We have some business to transact. I hope to see you again."

I said the proper thing and he went. Before I had finished my cutlet alla Milanese, however, he returned and continued: "Talking about cousins, that Greek

man, Ulysses, had a cousin named Riccardo who went to the Crusades, they were all travellers in his family. On his return from Palestine he was so unfortunate as to lose his way. You have heard of the Crusades ? He arrived in a country whose king had given orders that all strangers were to be killed. But the king's daughter fell in love with him and threw her arms round him so that they could not shoot him without hurting her. Her father granted her wish. And as she was baking the wedding-cake, she asked him to watch it and not let it burn while she went out into the market-place to buy a tomato to colour the risotto."

I thought this rather malicious of the gentleman ; no doubt he had introduced it merely to show me that he knew more than I knew, and more even than the landlady, about colouring the risotto.

" While the princess was absent, Riccardo, left alone in the kitchen, watching the cake and meditating on his troubles, heard a voice outside singing : ' O Riccardo, O mio re ! ' He could scarcely believe his ears. When the voice had finished the first verse Riccardo replied by singing the second verse, for he knew the song ; and then he climbed up to the window and looked out into the street. It was his own minstrel wandering the world and seeking him. The cake was burnt, but he escaped ; and the princess stabbed herself in despair. Arrivederci."

This time he really did go ; and presently, when I had finished my bottle of Ghemme, I felt equal to smoking my cigarette and drinking my coffee without the further assistance of his babbling. Nevertheless, I was depressed ; and I could not tell why. The Ghemme did not taste quite as the Ghemme on the Mountain used to taste. But that seemed to be an insufficient explanation. Here

was I in the most beautiful dining-room in the world; it was after luncheon, and no one ever commits suicide within a couple of hours or so after a good meal; and yet I was depressed—even more depressed than I had been after the dinner at the Albergo della Posta in the spring.

Chapter 8 Recalling the Past

IT seemed to me that Butler and I were going round the chapels and came to the Temptation in the Wilderness. He said :

" Do you observe the fresco of Satan in the sky ? "

" What is he doing ? " I inquired.

" Don't you see ? " replied Butler. " He is in convulsions of rage because he has got the worst of the argument, and he is discharging all his natural functions at once."

I looked again and saw that Satan in the sky had become the cock that crew when Peter denied Christ ; he had flown from his perch and in his beak was carrying one of the real stones with which, when he was the Devil, he had tempted our Saviour. He stopped in his flight and perched on a branch of a tree in the Garden of Gethsemane, just over the sleeping disciples ; and Peter's bald head attracted his notice. He opened his beak and crowed, and at last his " Cock-a-doodle-do " was satisfactorily like the Piemontese patois, " Ciocc' anch' anc'uei ? "

The stone fell, and I looked to see Peter's skull cracked ; but he had escaped and lost himself in the crowd that was following Christ in Tabachetti's Journey to Calvary chapel and we were looking on.

I said : " I still don't see the justice of punishing A for B's fault."

" Oh," replied Butler, " it is not so bad as that. Remember *Life and Habit*; and then if you solve the mystery of personal identity by seeing Christ and His Father as One, it may fairly be said that God did suffer on the Cross. It is more interesting at this time of day to observe what a capital likeness of Christ S. Veronica has taken on her handkerchief."

Before I could reply, Dionigi said : " Yes, and that is why S. Veronica has been appointed Patron Saint of the photographers."

Dionigi was there because we were now in the loggia of the albergo, sitting at the banquet of 1887 ; and, in the middle of the table, was Riccardo's wedding-cake and it had a hole in it—no doubt made by the fire when he let it burn ; and in and out of the hole Bertoli's bees were buzzing ; and I knew that the cake had really been made by the chef at Pagani's with honey sent by Dionigi for one of our Erewhon dinners. Herod's two laughing boys had come out of his chapel and were waiting on us. They wore their napkins as scarves and were handing round the crayfish, the eggs, the cheese, the fruit, the bread and the wine. I only tasted a drop of my wine. I had no idea as to what kind of wine it might be ; it was not the least like any wine I had ever tasted. And then I became aware that it was not wine at all, it was the poison distilled from the celery which killed Socrates. But Butler drank a whole glass of his and I looked to see what would happen, His breathing became slower and he turned pale. I tried to get up and go over to him, but I could not move. His breathing became slower still and more difficult, and he grew dim and shadowy while I looked until he faded

away and was gone, leaving us others sitting there around the table without him.

But we were no longer on the Mountain, nor were we at Pagani's ; we were now at the second dinner down at the Albergo della Posta. And through the open window I heard a voice as of some one passing along the street, singing. I knew the melody, but could not remember the words and looked inquiringly at Dionigi.

" It is Gianduja," he said, " he always sings on his way home. This evening it is one of the popular Piemontese songs."

" No, no, Dionigi," interrupted the sindaco, " he is singing ' Vi ravviso, O luoghi ameni,' and he could not have chosen a more graceful compliment to our guest."

Whereupon I became S. Joseph asleep in my chair with my thumb stuck in my waistcoat pocket, and the angel was appearing to me and saying :

" I did not mean to disturb you ; but as you are awake, see, I have brought you the honesty seeds you asked for."

I pulled myself together, apologized, and thanked her for the seeds.

" You have been dreaming of our dear Mr. Butler," said the landlady.

Chapter 9 Saluting the Future

YES; and it would be strange if I could fall asleep after a luncheon in her loggia and not dream of him. The climate of Varallo not only favours the birth and growth of legend, nor does it merely revive old memories; it urges one to make attempts to resuscitate the past. The examples of Gianduja and of the blessed Bernardini Caimi were before me. They had modestly set out to give no more than artistic representations, which is as much as should be attempted; and they had both been fairly successful, whereas I, forgetting Rockstro's elementary principle, had ambitiously set my stage with the Sacro Monte itself—no mere resemblances or fancy dress for me—hoping that I might thereby help myself to live again, if only for a few hours, in the past. And my careful return to the very scene, instead of helping me, had raised an obstacle by insisting on the contrast between the memory of the golden days when Butler and I used to go round the chapels together and this actual melancholy autumn morning on which I could do nothing better than go round them in solitude. Here was the cause of my depression. This contrast was the drop of bitterness that surged in the wine-cups of Varallo, changing the flavour of the Grignolino, of the Barbera, the Ghemme, the Barolo, the Xeres and the Grignasco. I shall resist further temptations to try and galvanize the

past into a semblance of life ; I shall be content with my memories in their natural incorporeal form, lest this contrast arise again and transmute all the wine of my life into hemlock.

Butler used to protest that he did not sympathize with dwelling on the past, he considered that it savoured of introspection. One of his complaints against the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus was that he was morbidly introspective. And yet he was himself introspective by temperament. Nevertheless he took the line that the past should be left to look after itself and that we ought to confront the future in the healthy spirit in which Bertoli's bees confront it, unburdened with conscious yearnings, and incurious about mysteries whether of theology or of nature. When the bees are brought down to Varallo for a season of seclusion during the winter, they do not look upon themselves as symbolically dead and buried in a replica of that Chapel of the Entombment into which, while humming and hovering over the Sacro Monte, they must have looked many times since it has been placed there. They attend to their own business ; they shut themselves up and keep quiet and warm, resting and thankfully taking their daily ration of sugar-candy, waiting for the sip of Grignolino which shall confirm their instinct that spring is at hand. They know that it is their Easter, the hour of their joyful resurrection, and they ascend again to Alagna without giving so much as a passing thought to the figure of the Risen Christ which has now for some years embellished the piazza. If they were looking for analogies and parallel passages they would agree with the modern view, and, instead of seeing in the events represented in the chapels historical records of miracles performed less than

two thousand years ago, they would recognize them as Parables from Nature—symbolical restatements in new forms of elementary truths. They pass them all by. By temperament they resemble Gallio rather than either Butler or the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus; they care for none of these things. The present occupies them so busily in preparing for the future that the only past now affecting them is one which became absorbed into their system prehistoric ages before that recent one which the Blessed Bernardino Caimi was more particularly endeavouring to recall. Bees are now born knowing something of which Man is ignorant until, like Candide, after chapters and chapters of post-natal experience at last he learns it: "Il faut cultiver notre jardin."

But we must remember where we are. To quote Voltaire upon the Sacro Monte is to compete with Costantino Durio in the introduction of discords, and, unless for a sufficient dramatic reason, Rockstro used to forbid us to conclude upon an unresolved discord. Our final cadence must be cast in some other form. Let us substitute for the words of Candide's summing-up those other words of an earlier philosopher whose spiritual meaning was the same, and whose book has been considered sufficiently in harmony with the Gospels to be bound up in the same volume: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

Loreto

To Joseph Benwell Clark

Chapter 10 The Modulation

THE idea of visiting Loreto was put into my head by an elderly English lady at a table d'hôte in Venice. I had been agreeing with her on all the subjects on which one usually has to agree with elderly English ladies in Venice, and she had been (if I may follow her example and quote from memory)

> Repeating things at second-hand
> She'd heard, but did not understand,

the particular things being extracts from Ruskin and other writers wherewith her guide-book was enriched; and then she said:

"Can you tell me whether we shall be able to see the Parlour Door to-morrow? Baedeker says it is only open at Easter, but I should have thought they would not have kept it closed on Ascension Day."

I said: "What Parlour Door? I did not know they had such a thing here. There is something of the kind at Rome, but that is a staircase; or perhaps at Loreto; wouldn't it be there, with the rest of the Santa Casa?"

"Oh! no," replied the lady, "I am sure it is here, on the High Altar, S. Mark's Pala d'Oro."

It was one of those enharmonic modulations which, though they are nothing but approaching a sound in one sense and quitting it in another, nevertheless, like the fabled Arabian carpet, have the power to annihilate time

and space and to make us rulers over new kingdoms. I told her all I could remember about the pala d'oro, but the Santa Casa kept calling, calling all the time I spoke, and as soon as the lady left the table I returned in spirit to Loreto.

I had never been there, nor had I ever met any one who had, but I knew it was near Ancona, and this interested me because I had recently bought a wine-jug in blue-and-white crockery whose shape suggested that its designer had been thinking of poke-bonnets. It had been moulded with others at Pordenone and they had come down, a whole tribe of them, to be shipped from Venice to Ancona and used by the daughters of the wine-shops there in serving the sailors; and this was why they had "Bevi Caro" written on their fronts. I also knew that sanctuaries are usually in high places, and had heard that the angels, who flew from Nazareth with the Santa Casa, not being satisfied with the first spot that offered, had tried again and again; it therefore seemed probable, after so much trouble had been taken about it, that the site would be really captivating. I remembered also that there was something about the Santa Casa in the *Novelas Exemplares* of Cervantes, but of course I could not remember the actual passage till I got home and looked it up. I found it in "The Licentiate of Glass," where we are told about Tomas Rodaja:

> He returned to Naples and Rome and thence repaired to Our Lady of Loreto, in whose sacred temple he saw neither walls nor party-walls, because all were covered with crutches, grave-clothes, chains, fetters, handcuffs, hair, waxen busts, paintings and retablos, which gave manifest proof of the innumerable favours which many had received.

This was enough to set me dreaming. I pictured a lofty headland overlooking the Adriatic; the Dalmatian coast opposite shimmered through the haze like a promise;

inland lay a cloud-dappled campagna, very fertile, covered with farms, cornfields and vineyards; I crowned the headland with a group of higgledy-piggledy buildings, the highest a church with a cupola, and in this church I placed the Holy House. In not making it a large house I was influenced partly by my recollection of that other house at Stratford-on-Avon, and partly by a desire that the pilgrims should have space to walk round it inside the church; so I planned it with one sitting-room on the ground floor, built out a back addition for the kitchen, and put in a staircase leading to the bedroom above. This would be enough, and with the walls and party-walls decorated in the manner indicated by Cervantes ought to prove a model sanctuary.

Chapter 11 The Santa Casa

NOT long afterwards, in the spring of 1902, circumstances made it possible and I went to Ancona. I spent the evening looking about for the brothers of my jug. The sort of wine-shops I expected to find flourish under the arches opposite the quay at Genoa; in Ancona nothing of the kind was to be seen—only the ordinary caffè with the ordinary waiter and not a blue-and-white jug in the whole town. This was a disappointment; but in the stationers' windows were illustrated post-cards showing the angels carrying the house. There it all was with one window by the side of the front door on the ground floor and two windows above; some of the pictures gave it a sloping roof with tiles, and a chimney, no doubt, for the kitchen, though the back addition was not indicated. I had given my house a flat roof with no chimney in the Eastern manner; but these slight alterations were soon carried out and were perhaps of little consequence, for there were other post-cards showing the roof loaded with such a cargo of angels that its shape was uncertain; it was also uncertain whether the angels were assisting in the transit or concealing the artist's ignorance about the form of the roof.

The train takes nearly an hour to go from Ancona to Loreto, and the country through which it passes is just what it ought to be; moreover, most of the way my headland was visible to the left of the line overlooking the sea, a magnificent pile, even finer than I had imagined.

It is called Monte Conero; but on the top, where the Sanctuary ought to have stood, nothing of the kind was to be seen—only a coast-guard station, and the train passed by without paying any attention to it and drew up at Loreto. Then, looking out on the other side of the line, I was disappointed to see what certainly was the Sanctuary on a paltry little hill, four or five kilometres inland. The church had a cupola but, when I realized that it must be at least eight or ten kilometres from the sea, the desirable marine residence which I had been designing began to lose some of its attractions.

The station-yard was alive with vehicles and yelling drivers, but as it was not a festa there were few fares. I drove up with two other passengers to the Sanctuary and, on arriving in the piazza, plunged into the church and looked about for the Santa Casa. Nothing of the kind was to be seen—only an excessively ornamented marble monument behind the altar, about the right size but all wrong in shape; it had an opening with a grille through which lights glimmered, but it could never be the Santa Casa—it must be the sarcophagus of some ecclesiastical dignitary. I settled on one of the official guides, as a bee settles on a flower, and tried to suck his honey. He was unsympathetic, almost testy; he said:

"The Santa Casa is always open; the treasure will be locked up in twenty minutes; come and see that."

It was a trial of patience; but first I extracted from him that the marble monument does, after all, contain the House and that one is allowed to go actually inside it; then I accompanied him to his treasury.

This is the second collection; Napoleon stole the first and, figuratively speaking, melted it down into cannon; it had taken five centuries to form and, unless the guide's

information was false or his memory defective, had been worth ninety-six millions of lire, which is at the rate of nearly twenty millions per century. They have not been getting on so well during the last 100 years : the present treasure is not even reputed to be worth more than four million lire up to date. It proved unable to fix the attention of one who only a few days before had been gazing into the jewellers' shops on the Ponte Vecchio in Florence. While pretending to admire it, I was amusing myself by prowling in imagination all over the Santa Casa, passing in and out of the rooms, up and down the staircase and looking out of the windows.

It is a well-known characteristic of wealth, whatever form it may assume, that it never lasts so long as we think it will. The treasure was no exception ; we came to the end of it—ran through it, in fact—long before it was time to lock it up, and at last approached one of the doors of the marble monument. The guide said it led to the kitchen, which sounded so hospitable that it would have been ungracious to object to going in at the back door ; but it was not easy to get in, the half-dozen pilgrims already there nearly blocked it up and it must be said that, as a kitchen, it really is too small. It does, however, contain a fairly commodious fireplace, and over this, in a gilded niche, a black statue of the Madonna and Child. The guide told me that they were made of cedar of Lebanon and had been sculptured by S. Luke. The faces are uncovered, but otherwise the figures are swathed in drapery which again is smothered with the most brilliant jewels I have ever seen on a Madonna. The pilgrims were so much in the way that I retired, intending to return at some less devotional moment, and we entered the Santa Casa itself by what appeared to be the principal entrance.

The other disappointments were nothing to this. It is not a house at all. The most that can be said of it is that it is a room, and to tell the plain, straightforward, honest, manly, brutal truth it is no more than four bare walls. It left its floor and foundations in Nazareth, and, in spite of the post-cards, the roof, whether flat or sloping, has been lost. It is about thirty-one feet long by thirteen wide and eighteen high ; these measurements include the kitchen which is not an entirely separate room, it is only divided off at one end by a marble screen about six feet high in front of which stands the altar. The niche containing the statue is so high above the fireplace that if you stand at the other end of the room the Madonna and Child can be seen over the screen against the wall beyond, and they certainly sparkle very effectively in the light of the hanging lamps. The visible altar is only a case for the real one which came with the house and was consecrated in Nazareth by the Chief of the Apostles who celebrated mass at it. The four walls are said to be built of stones of Palestine, and the cement is said to be the true Hebrew cement, wherein naphtha manifests its presence as soon as it is polished and exposed to the sun. I should not have tested these statements had I been able to do so, for the many disappointments had caused my enthusiasm somewhat to evaporate, but I noticed that the stones were about the size of bricks, some larger, and of a reddish brown colour, very shiny as high up as the pilgrims could reach to polish them with their kisses.

The things that concealed the walls from Tomas Rodaja have been taken away since his time ; nothing conceals the walls now, except that the kitchen is panelled with copper and ornamented with gilded hearts and similar objects. The party-walls also have been removed, if the

true reason why he did not see them was that in his time they were concealed by the grave-clothes, hair, waxen busts, etc. : or perhaps by party-walls Cervantes means the screen in front of the kitchen fire. Or is it possible that Cervantes had never been there and was constructing a house out of his imagination ? Such things have been done.

This House or, rather room, is enclosed in a marble case which, from the door of the church, is easily mistaken for a monument, and the opening in it with the grille corresponds with the only window of the room through which the Angel Gabriel entered to make the Annunciation. The modern floor and ceiling were added with the marble case which was originally built to adjoin and strengthen the four walls, but either the walls shrank, or the marble recoiled, or a miracle of some sort occurred, and now a child can walk round between the House and the case. The case was designed by Bramante and is adorned with appropriate scenes in very high relief also with columns, statues of prophets, sibyls and so on, the work of eminent sculptors. It is raised on one marble step, and the pilgrims waddle round it on their knees along the top of the step which is thus worn for considerable distances into a pair of irregular channels, especially behind the kitchen, that being the part nearest to the statue and therefore the most sacred. The guide said that these channels are not really scooped out by the knees of the pilgrims, which I was glad to hear, they scoop with the toes of their boots ; and, moreover, he said that it is chiefly Neapolitan boots that do it, the Neapolitans having a more ardent faith than the dwellers in any other locality ; which was his way of saying that Neapolitans wear iron toe-caps, come to Loreto in great numbers, and never neglect to kneel round the Santa Casa.

Chapter 12 The Tablet

SO that was all. I came away much disappointed; but as we passed down the church I made a discovery. Between the windows are large tablets fastened to the wall, and on these are inscribed in various languages accounts of the transportations of the Santa Casa : there was one in particular about which the guide, having been told it was in the Scotch language, wanted to consult me. He evidently did not believe in the Scotch language, though he did in the Santa Casa ; but then he had not been brought up on the Waverley Novels. I, on the other hand, had not been brought up in the shadow of the Sanctuary—and thus we see how one man's gnat may be another man's camel. I gave particular attention to the Scotch tablet and was so fascinated by it that I copied it. The lettering was somewhat out of repair in places but, subject to any unintentional inaccuracies, the inscription reads as follows :

THE WONDROUS FLITTINGE OF THE KIRK OF OUR BLEST LEDY OF LAURETO.

The kirk of Laureto was a caumber of the blest virgin near Ierusalem in the towne of Nazaret in whilk she was borne and teende up and greeted by the Angel, and thairin also conceaved and norisht her son Jesus whill he was twalle zear awd. This caumber, efter the ascensione

of our B. Seviour was by the Apostles hallowed and made a kirk in honour of our B. Ledy, and S. Luke framed a picture to her vary likeness thair zit to be seine. It was haunted with muccle devotione by the folke oof the land whar it stood als lang as they were Catholiks. Bot when they forseckte the Christien feth and went efter the errour of Mahomet the angels took it and set it in Sclavonia by a towne nemmed Fiumen. Wher net being honored as it sould, they transported it over sea to a wood in the Bounds of Recanati belanging to a neble dame called Laureto, frae whem it tuke it nem of our B. Ledy of Laureto, and thence again for cause of many thefries to a hill of twa brothers, in the same bounds. And lastly for there striving for the gifts and oblations, to the high road neir by, whar it zit stands merveillous for mirakels and above ground without foundations. Wharat the indwellers of the towne of Recanati, wha came aft to sie it meikle wondring, bigged a great wall about it. Zit caude ne man tel wherfrae it cam first, whill in the yeir MCCXCVI the B.V. in sleipe revelled it to a helly devote man and he telled it to divers of authority in this place, whe presently resolving to try the treuth of the vizione decried to find out saxteine parsons of credit whem they sent altogather to that end to the towne of Nazaret, garring them to beare with them the mesur of this kirk and to met it thair with the foundatione whilk was zit to the fore. They fand them baith alike, and in a wall therby ingravne that it had stud thair, and had forgaune the place and than cuming back agen, declared the forseide vizione to be trew, and frae that tim fourth, it hes beine surly kend that this kirk was the caumber of the B.V. wharto Christens begun than and hes ever efter hed muccle devotione, for that in it daily she hes dun and dus

many and many mirakels. Ane frier Paule de Sylva, an eremit of muccle godlines, wha woned in a cell neir-by this kirk whar daily he went to mattins, seyd that for ten zeirs, one the eight of September, tweye hours before day, he sawe a light descend from heaven upon it, whilk he seyd was the B.V. wha thair shawed herselfe one the feest of har birth. In proofe of all whilk, twa verteous men of the seyd towne of Recanati many times avowed to me, Ruler of Terreman and Governor of the foreseyd kirk, as followeth : Ane of them, nemmed Paul Renalduci affermed that his grandsyres grandsyre sawe whan the angels broght it over sea, setting it in the foreseyd wood, and hed aft frequented it thair. The other nemmed Francis Prior sicklick seyd that his grandsyre being a hunder and twanty zeirs awd had also meikle haunted it in the same place. And for a mere surtestimony that it hed beine thair, he reported that his grandsyres grandsyre hed a house beside wharin he dwelled, and that in his dayes it was beared by the angels frae thence to the hill of they tweye brothers whar they set it as seyd is.

By decree of the meikle worthy monsignor Vincent Casal of Bolonia, Ruler of this helly place, under the protection of the mest werthy Cardinal Moroni.

I, Robert Corbington priest of the Company of Jesus in the zeir MDCXXXV have trulie translated the premisses out of the Latin storie hangged in the seyd kirk.

To the Praise and Glorie of the Mest Pure and immaculate Virgin.

In saying that St. Luke " framed a picture," the tablet no doubt means that he fashioned the statue which is in the house and which came with it from Nazareth.

There are other versions of the story; one omits the "neble dame" and accounts for the name of Laureto by saying that the House was, on the night of December 10, 1294, deposited in a wood of laurels on the smiling hill of Piceno, near my promontory Monte Conero, and in the morning the trees were found inclined to the earth in adoration. St. Francis has the distinction of having foretold this miracle a century before. It would seem that he was in a taciturn humour that morning, disinclined to use seven words where one would do, for he merely said "Picenum." His meaning was subsequently revealed to one of his followers, no doubt in a vision, and can be made clear to any wide-awake reader if the word be written as an acrostic with its solution thus:— P (ortatur) J (uxta) C (onerum) Æ (dicula) N (azarena) V (irginis) M (ariae).

The House left its marks in all the places where it rested; they are still to be seen and are much venerated; they correspond exactly, just as the foundations at Nazareth do, with the measurements of the House at Loreto.

Now that it is too late the inhabitants of Fiume have turned from the sin of their forefathers. When the red and yellow sails of their fishing-smacks are seen floating across the Adriatic, their repentant voices may be heard praying in vain to the Virgin and singing:

A noi ritorna con la tua Casa, O Maria!

But 600 years ago those forefathers must have been disgracefully irreverent: the House would not stay among them longer than three years, from 1291 to 1294. The laurels were not much better, for, wearying of their attitudes of adoration, they grew with such reckless luxuriance as to attract and harbour brigands. This

was the reason for the move to the hill of the two brothers who turned out to be just as bad; they were on the point of settling their differences about the offerings after the manner of Cain and Abel when the House saved one or both of their worthless lives by making its last move.

The translations to and from their hill were accomplished by 1295, when the House arrived where it now stands. We are to take it that this was literally upon the high road which had to be diverted; thus there was no wood to conceal lurking robbers and, the road being public property, no private owners to dispute about the gifts. The House, as has been said, has no foundation, and, if the child walking round between the walls and the marble case carries a candle, any one inside can see the moving light in the places where the walls do not touch the uneven ground.

Chapter 13 The Return

IT may have occurred to the reader that the House has no foundation in more senses than one, and that it rests for the most part on what in England we call hearsay evidence. But notions of evidence are not the same in every country, and they order this matter, if not better, at least differently in Italy. One has only to read the reports of law proceedings, such as the Palizzolo trial at Bologna or the Musolino trial at Lucca or any trial that may happen to be proceeding, to be led to the (possibly erroneous) conclusion that not merely "what the soldier said" but what the witness believed the soldier to have thought would be received with acclamation as evidence of the first importance in any Court of Justice throughout the country. Miracles are not usually tested in Courts of Justice, but if there is to be any evidence of them it would seem reasonable to ask that, as an ordinary story must be supported by ordinary evidence, so an extraordinary story should be supported by extraordinary evidence. Nevertheless it often happens that things go by contraries; even a little unfamiliarity breeds reverence, and, accordingly, the greater the miracle the less the evidence required. Would it not then have been better to allow the miracle at Loreto to rest upon its own miraculousness? Why should anything be offered in the name of proof? Why introduce "a helly devote

man," "an eremit of muccle godlines" and "Paul Renalduci's grandsyre's grandsyre?" What are these old people doing on that tablet?

The answer is that they are doing no harm there; they are evidence not of the miracle but of the courteous readiness of the authorities to accommodate any poor pilgrim who may feel he ought not to be sent away without being shown some kind of peg to hang his belief on. They are the homage that Faith pays to Reason. And who can withstand their picturesque charm? They quite revived my interest in the Santa Casa and reconciled me to all the disappointments.

This does not dispose of the question of miracles, about which notions differ as widely as they do about evidence. Miracles we have always with us, and no one with a touch of poetry in him ever had the slightest difficulty in believing in them; his difficulty has always been to disbelieve in them. But the poetic temperament is impatient of dictation. Any endeavour to convince Walt Whitman, for instance, that all the things said about the Santa Casa actually occurred would probably have failed; yet only let him have his own way and he tells us that "a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of heretics." Substitute a sunset for a mouse and I seem to remember that one of the quotations retailed by my elderly English lady in Venice amounted to much the same thing. The magic carpet of a modulation accomplishes journeys that are no less staggering. What can be more miraculous than the way in which Music transports her worshipper from key to key?—conveying him first, it may be, to some peaceful shore where little ripples break at his feet and sea-gulls circle over his head; then, on a wild night, plunging him into a grove of laurels

where robbers crouch amid the gloom and the branches drip with the blood of their victims ; next, perhaps, she sets him shuddering on a plat of rising ground, while the breezes comfort him with distant bells ; and then she takes him to a highway and shows him country-folk passing by at sunrise, carrying chickens and eggs to market, and presently a town springs up around him. Thus Music " daily hes dun and dus many and many mirakels " ; but, wherever she goes with him, in the end she always faithfully restores him to the place from which she took him. It may be, when the " errour of Mahomet " shall have been finally exposed, that the angels will take up the Santa Casa once more and modulate it back to its original foundations at Nazareth.

Castellinaria

To Augustus Theodore Bartholomew

Chapter 14 Mrs. and Miss Jones

IN 1912, when I arrived at Castellinaria and Peppino and I were driving up the zigzags from the station to the town, he apologized because his hotel, the Albergo della Madonna (con giardino) was rather full. The Albergo Belvedere, where the English go, was under repair and most of the guests had come to him.

"This year," he said, "shall you don't be lonely. This year shall you be finding English ladies plenty many, also you shall be their gentleman."

I protested that it was impossible for me to be lonely at his hotel. Besides, I did not come to Castellinaria for the purpose of meeting English ladies. But if it was to be so, I would make the best of it and behave as like an English gentleman as the atmosphere of the place would permit.

Peppino did not take me to dine with him in semi-private as usual; our room was occupied because there was so much going on in the albergo this year, and he asked me to dine in the large dining-room with the other guests. Of course I agreed, and the first evening I was put at a table with a lady of mature years and her daughter. In the course of conversation it turned out that the lady's name was Jones, and, further, that one of her sons, Charles, who was recently dead, had been at

my school, and also at my college at Cambridge, but not actually with me; he was a few years younger.

"Quite a string of coincidences," said Mrs. Jones. And she treated the coincidences as sufficient introduction and became extremely friendly.

"My daughter and I have come to Sicily entirely on my account," said she, "and especially for my eyes. It was by the advice of my old friend Sir William, and now I see by *The Times* of yesterday that we have lost him."

"Not yesterday, Mamma dear," interposed Miss Jones, "it was *The Times* that came two days ago."

"Oh well, it doesn't matter which day it was. You see," she added, turning to me, "I depend entirely on my daughter for everything. She never leaves me. She reads to me now that my eyes are failing. And there's another thing—she does the flowers for me. You may say it is a pity she should give up so much for her old mother, but really I don't think she minds it."

"Mind it, Mamma dear!" exclaimed Miss Jones. "Why, I simply love it."

It having been settled that the daughter simply loved reading to her mother and doing the flowers for her, there came a pause broken by Miss Jones, who inquired:

"Have you noticed our waiter?"

"Well, yes," I replied, "I have noticed that we have a waiter; but is there anything remarkable about him which I have missed?"

"Haven't you noticed his curly, golden hair?"

"Now I look at it," I said, "it is very golden for a Sicilian."

"And his confiding blue eyes?"

"Certainly they are very blue," I admitted.

"And did you ever see a waiter with such aristocratic manners?" she asked.

I was not sure about that, but his appearance was more aristocratic than that of Luigi, the other waiter. Then I asked her, "Have you managed to catch his name? I cannot make out what they call him."

"They call him Rista," said she.

Mrs. Jones put up her glasses. "He looks far from well, and I am sure there must be something queer about him. Rista is not an Italian name—at least I never heard it before, and I don't like it. Besides—he smokes too much."

"Oh, Mamma dear!" ejaculated the daughter, "I've never seen him smoking."

"Perhaps not, my dear, and I don't object to it in moderation. It's true he does not smoke while he is waiting at table, I should think not indeed! But you've only to look at him. See how pale he is! It stands to reason. And it must be very bad for him."

"Yes, Mamma dear."

I did not feel equal to dealing with the smoke question, but I agreed that the name Rista required looking into; and we passed on to other subjects. It soon appeared that Mrs. Jones and her daughter, whose name was Edith, were both very fond of music, and I was told all about their visit to Bayreuth. They took rooms there for a week and heard three operas. Their landlord was a devoted Wagnerian and made all the arrangements for them.

"Our landlord was most anxious that we should not be late," said the old lady, "and made us get to the theatre by 3.15 and the opera didn't begin till 4. So we had to wait. The German Emperor was in the town, and was

to come to the performance. The theatre, you know, is arranged with seats rising above one another and boxes at the back. When it was nearly 4 o'clock every one turned and looked at the royal box. At last the royal party arrived. There was the Empress who bowed and smiled, and bowed and smiled, and took her seat, and the Prince Regent of Bavaria——"

"Mamma dear, wasn't it Prince Henry of Prussia?" interrupted Miss Jones.

"No, it was the Pr—— Yes, I believe you are right. It was Prince Henry of Prussia, the brother of the Kaiser; how stupid of me! And the Kaiser himself was there, but he would sit down in a corner of the box and one hardly saw anything of him. And then the lights were put out and we had the first act. As soon as ever it was over and the lights were on again, the whole audience turned round and stared at the royal party; and then we went out to get something to eat. There were two restaurants, one on each side of the theatre, so we went to the one on our side—quite full; but we managed to snatch some coffee——"

"Mamma dear, wasn't it beer the first time?" said the daughter.

"It was coffee," reiterated the old lady severely. "Coffee the first time and beer the second."

"Yes, Mamma dear."

"Coffee and sandwiches, and while I put mine down to get out my money to pay, some one nearly walked off with them. Then we went back to our places, and the staring continued until the lights were turned down, and we had the second act. We were made to take off our bonnets you know, and I had to sit en cheveux, but it was dark, so that it didn't matter. As soon as the second

act was over the lights were turned up again and every one stared at the Emperor's party ; and then we had to make another rush for more food, snatched whatever we could, and I remember quite well it was beer this time, as I said ; then back to our seats again ; more staring, till the lights were turned down ; and then we had the third act."

Mrs. Jones did not tell me which opera she had listened to on this occasion, and I did not ask. I expressed my gratification at hearing such an intelligent account by a really musical person of one of Wagner's operas, whichever it may have been, performed as he himself intended it should be done.

It was an easy transition from the music of Bayreuth to the music in the cathedral at Castellinaria.

" Edith went the other day with her friends the Smiths, those people who have the house near the gate of the town, with the large garden—people who have lived here ever so long. And Edith says it is all done without any music."

" Not exactly without music, Mamma dear, because they are singing all the——"

" My dear Edith, I do wish you would not interrupt. I know what I am talking about. Of course they are singing all the time, but singing without any accompaniment. That's what I say. And I do think it is so odd that they should sing like that. I must go if only to hear how it sounds. Next time you see Mrs. Smith you might ask her to call, and then we can arrange for me to go and hear this wonderful singing."

" Yes, Mamma dear."

" I don't promise to like it," continued Mrs. Jones. " It seems such a funny idea not to use the organ when you have one. If the organist is ill I am sure Edith would be pleased to officiate. You know," she added, turning to

me, " my daughter is a most accomplished pianist. She finds it such a resource."

" Oh, Mamma ! " interjected Edith.

" Well, my dear, you know what Signor Locatelli said about your playing when we were in Florence."

" I am sure Mr. Jones does not want to hear that."

Of course I protested that I did, and Edith was sure I did not, until Mrs. Jones cut us both short by saying : " Never mind. I shall wait till I catch him alone and then he will have to hear it."

At this point I observed Peppino hanging about on the terrace evidently waiting for me and, as we had finished dinner, I said : " There is Peppino. If you will excuse me, I will leave you. He wishes to speak to me."

" And who is Peppino ? " asked Mrs. Jones.

" He is our landlord," I replied.

" Oh ! Signor Pampalone," exclaimed the lady. " Do you know him ? "

" He is my compare," I replied.

" And what is a compare ? " inquired Mrs. Jones.

" I am the godfather of his eldest son, Ricuzzu, and that makes me his compare and in a spiritual sense a member of his family."

" We shall see you again, I hope ? " said Mrs. Jones.

" Oh, I hope so. I am not going away for some time."

So I left them, and joined my compare who had come to take me to call on his wife, Brancaccia, and my godson, Ricuzzu. Brancaccia received me in her usual friendly manner, regretting that they were so full in the albergo this year, and Ricuzzu treated me as a well-behaved godson ought to treat his godfather. I gave him a box of bricks which I had brought from London and with which he played until bed-time.

Chapter 15 Ninu

THE next evening after dinner the ladies and I were sitting in the veranda watching the lights on the water. The post had come and there was a letter from Mrs. Jones's daughter-in-law about the boy who, it appeared, was now ten years old, and the letter referred to a family discussion about what profession he should take up. I gathered that the discussion had been raging pretty briskly for some months, and the old lady was so full of it that she could not help giving me her views. She wanted the boy to be an engineer, and the rest of the family did not agree with her; or else they agreed in principle but not in detail; I do not claim to have understood the position very thoroughly.

"You see," she said, "Booboy is clever with his fingers, at least his poor dear father was, and Booboy is very hereditary, oh yes, I assure you, quite up to date—what is called a Darwinian. And the Duke of Wellington was an Engineer, which makes it seem so natural."

The introduction of the Duke of Wellington puzzled me; so I ignored it for the present, hoping that enlightenment might follow, and began something about: "Well, if—excuse me, I did not quite catch the boy's name?"

"Oh," she said, "No. His name is Reggie. He was christened Reginald after his grandfather, the Archdeacon; but in the family we always call him Booboy; it is a name invented by his little sister almost before she

could speak; we think it such a pretty idea. And you wouldn't believe how capitally it suits him."

I continued: "Well, if Reggie—or rather Booboy—is clever with his fingers I should——" but I was not allowed to continue.

"I don't think you quite understand. My daughter-in-law doesn't understand. This is the way I look at it. I don't want him to be just any kind of engineer, not the man who comes and sees to the meter when you have an escape of gas in the house; of course I do not mean that, and I never said I did. I don't want Booboy to be a gas engineer, or an electrical engineer either. His education will, I hope, fit him for something better than to associate with men of that class. Then there is the civil engineer—that is more the sort of thing, at all events it sounds better; and, besides, Booboy is very polite, always was. I remember when he was scarcely more than a baby and a lady was calling—but, however, that has nothing to do with the Duke of Wellington and that's what I'm thinking of. Now the Duke of Wellington was a Royal Engineer. That's the kind I mean—a Royal Engineer. And he was so like my poor son, Booboy's father. You must have noticed it, Edith dear."

"Mamma dear," said Edith, "I did not know that the Duke was an Engineer, and he died before I was born so that I never saw him."

"Well, I never saw him," said her mother, "but you have seen pictures of him."

"I have noticed a kind of likeness to Charlie in the pictures, yes."

"Well, there you are. That's what I keep saying. Then why shouldn't he be a Royal Engineer too? That would be so much better."

"But, Mamma dear, Reggie never said he wanted to go into the army."

"Perhaps not," replied the old lady. "I dare say not. But it's an Engineer I want him to be. Why can't my little Booboy be a Royal Engineer? The Duke of Wellington was a Royal Engineer, and he was so like poor Charlie."

This attitude seemed to block further progress, and I tried to get the conversation round to music again; but Mrs. Jones would not allow it. She edged it towards painting and the charms of landscape.

"I was very ill once," she said. "You remember, Edith dear, how very ill I was two years ago?"

Edith remembered.

"I was so ill that they were afraid I should die, and so was I—in fact one day I thought I actually was dead; however, I said I was sure I should recover if I could only see a mountain."

Here she paused and giggled, and Edith looked uncomfortable.

"And then a young friend of mine, an artist—only an amateur you know, but Professor Ruskin said she would have been the greatest artist of the age if she had given herself to it, but there was some reason why she could not go on, I forget exactly what it was just at the moment."

"Mamma dear," suggested Edith, "hadn't it something to do with the turpentine?"

"The turpentine! now what can turpentine have had to do with it? No, it was the paint, of course; I remember now, she could not stand the smell of the paint, it made her quite unwell; oh! a very delicate sensibility, I assure you. Well, this young friend of mine called to

inquire and brought a picture to show me, one she had painted herself and, do you know, it had a mountain in it! After that I soon got well. She came to stay with us once and I took her for a walk; it was in the spring and the woods were carpeted—no, but I mean literally carpeted with bluebells; and where we live in the country you see the sea through trees, you understand? *through trees*; I think the sea is so much more beautiful when you see it through trees. And this artist friend of mine burst into tears. She said you couldn't tell where colour ended and sound began. That's what she said, and she burst into tears."

Then it appeared that Miss Jones's resources included painting as well as music, and before we parted we had agreed to go the next morning for a sketching picnic to a spot where the view is particularly fine and, if possible, to make a sketch. But it would be necessary to arrange about mules for the ladies, at least for one of the ladies, Mrs. Jones herself would not come.

"No," she said in excuse, "picnics are for you young ones, not for old people like me."

We endeavoured to persuade her to change her mind, but she was obdurate and said that if she came there would have to be three mules whereas by her plan there need only be two, one for Edith and one for me, and that would be so much better. I undertook to arrange everything with Peppino's help, and Miss Jones and I agreed to meet next morning at the door of the hotel and start at eight o'clock.

When I consulted Peppino, hoping that he would be our guide, he replied that he couldn't manage it. "Last night," he said, "a man, a bad man, went in the cathedral; he enter the treasure and stole his pocket full of

reliques. Now he is in security and I am seeing the policeman."

"Why? Is this burglar a friend of yours, Peppino?"

"I catch this man. I go to tell the policeman the story of the catch."

"Bravo! Allow me to congratulate you on your skill as an amateur constable."

"Grazie," replied Peppino. "And the ladies, and the mules, Ninu shall be taking you. It is now seven days since the funeral."

"What funeral?"

"His uncle it is dying, but after seven days it is no matter. Now we shall be finding Ninu."

Ninu (Antonino) is a guide. That is to say, he knows the way to the Cyclopæan walls, to the Saracen Castle, to the Cortile Arabo, to the semaforo and to all the other objects which visitors think they ought to see. A curious thing about him is that he has scarcely altered since I first made his acquaintance when he was fifteen, about four years earlier than the time of which I am now writing. This does not mean that he is still a child, it is rather that then he was already a man. He is only a little taller now than he was then, and his face is a little more set. There exists between us a romantic friendship, but I do not know how it began. When I arrive in the automobile, he is at the gate and carries my luggage up through the town to the albergo; and when I go he carries it down again. I used to give him a franc for each job. But one day, after carrying my luggage up, he refused to accept his franc. No. We are friends for life, and the relationship must not be sullied by questions of money. I acquiesced without understanding and put my franc back into my pocket feeling somewhat ashamed of myself.

The following year when I went away, he carried my luggage as usual to the automobile at the gate, and I did not offer him anything; we merely said good-bye and parted like friends and equals in the presence of all who happened to be there. But my train did not go for an hour or more, and, while I was having luncheon in the refreshment room, who should appear but Ninu; he had come down on foot most politely to see the last of me. I took the opportunity of saying:

"It's all very well, Ninu, but don't you think I might be allowed to pay you for your labour in carrying my luggage to the albergo when I arrived and down to the automobile this morning? It needn't interfere with the terms of our friendship, you know."

He immediately agreed and took two francs.

Peppino explains the romantic friendship by saying that Ninu's family is under obligations to his family and, now that I have become a member of Peppino's family, Ninu considers himself to be under obligations to me also.

As we went along to look for the boy Peppino gave me particulars of Ninu's late uncle, who, he said, was a man not to be admired, a stupid man: "A man that was working and working not only day but night also until he died. And not to spend, not to take divertisement at all. It was a man who never enjoy his life, never to buy the photograph, never to make the collection of the stamp, never to spend a penny in the cinematografo. He gain plenty much money and his son shall now be rich; but not to enjoy neither the son, not more than the father, because the malady came to the son and for one year he was—what is it?—lottare per la vita—to struggle for his life without no satisfaction at all. I went to the funeral for this man out of duty, not out of respect. Better

to enjoy the money and take care of the family."

"What did the uncle die of?"

"The uncle he come home, he mount to his room, he open the window, he fall down, he become himself one frightfullest tomato on the street."

"Do you mean he did it on purpose? How shocking!"

"He was a very stupid old man."

We found Ninu and laid the proposition before him. He said that his uncle's death should not interfere with business and that he would be ready with two mules next morning.

Chapter 16 The Sketching Picnic

NEXT morning there was Ninu with two mules at the door of the albergo in his best clothes with a rose fastened behind his ear and a smile spread all over his face. Edith Jones was also ready, and so was the old lady. I thought she had come down to see us off, but she had changed her mind; she had come to accompany us and to ride on the other mule.

"You see," she said, "I thought I might as well make the effort. I'm not so young or so active as I once was, but Sir William said that, so long as I do not try my eyes, exercise would be good for them. In moderation, I mean. 'Take as much exercise as you like, in moderation.' That was his advice. 'Don't overdo it, that's all.'"

I assured her that I was delighted to think we were to have the pleasure of her company, and that no one could call one picnic overdoing it. I did not say anything, nor did she, about the second mule having been originally intended for me. So we started and proceeded along a rugged, narrow path, Ninu attending to and encouraging the mules, while I divided my attention between the two riders.

"I am afraid our guide looks far from well," said Mrs.

Jones when he was safely out of earshot. "Do you know who is his doctor?"

I replied that I doubted whether Ninu had ever consulted a doctor.

"Oh, but that is most rash," said she. "Of course I don't mean that he ought to go to the first doctor whose name he sees up in the street. No; that would never do. He must make proper inquiries of course."

Here Ninu came back from attending to Miss Jones and after belabouring Mrs. Jones's mule and discharging a mouthful of foul dialect at it, left us again.

"Some one ought to speak to him," continued Mrs. Jones. "I know so well what it is to be without a doctor now that my old friend Sir William has passed away. I can scarcely hope to be so fortunate again as I was in finding him. I knew he was ill because when Edith went to fix the appointment the servant told her he was laid up. But he made an exception in my favour. I thought it so nice and kind of him. And then at the appointment he put some stuff into my eye, and we had to wait an hour and a half while it worked; so I took the opportunity of telling him that in Vienna I had consulted Dr. Schloifer, and asked if he had ever heard of him. 'My master!' he exclaimed. Wasn't it strange? Quite a coincidence. I think the old man liked being reminded of his student days. He was very nice and kind, and we had quite a talk about doctors and their different treatments. The obituary does not say whether he has left any family, but he seems to have died worth a great deal of money—a country house as well as his town house and quite a large place. I should not have thought my old friend would have made so very much, for he had not the reputation of exacting heavy fees. I found him very moderate and, as I

say, very nice and kind. People complained that he was brusque in manner, but I did not find him brusque. It is true that he wouldn't listen to all I tried to tell him about my symptoms, and I sometimes wish I had had a second interview, but it was not to be and, after all, he was very nice and kind."

By this time Miss Jones had got on so far ahead that Mrs. Jones could not see her and began to worry about whether she had not fallen over a precipice; but Ninu presently hove in sight, coming back to see how we were getting on, and gave us the last news which was satisfactory.

"It's what I always say," continued the old lady: "Make proper inquiries, go to a good man, follow his treatment and you will derive benefit. There was Rosie Beamish who suffered so terribly from eczema, another case—poor girl! Her mother told me she had tried every doctor in London and that none of them had done her any good. I should like to know which doctors she had tried! As soon as they asked me, of course I said that I had heard Morris Reynolds very highly spoken of and recommended her to consult him, and she did. He naturally asked how old the child was, and when they told him 'Sixteen' he said, 'Very well then, I think we can effect a cure; but she must follow the treatment.' So she had to spend——"

I was wondering what treatment Rosie Beamish was going to be recommended to follow, when a turn in the path brought us suddenly to our destination and the flow of reminiscences stopped. The ladies dismounted; we looked about us and became absorbed in the view and in trying to distinguish the different buildings and streets.

"There is the Corso," said Ninu.

"Where is the Corso?" exclaimed Mrs. Jones. "Show me the Corso."

"It's that long road going through the town from the Villa to the port."

"I can't see it."

"You can see the sea, Mamma dear, can't you?" said Edith.

"Do you mean the sky?"

"They run into one another. I mean that the horizon is hazy," explained Edith.

"But why don't you say what you mean? You make it so trying for me if you don't say what you mean, and I'm trying to see the thing as it is. I'm sure I'm doing my best."

"Yes, Mamma dear."

"I don't think I'll try any more. My old friend Sir William said I was not to try them. 'Above all things never try your eyes,' that was what he said. I'll just sit in the shade here and get on with my knitting; that always rests them. It will be so much better. And I dare say luncheon will be ready soon."

So we packed her up on a smooth stone in the shade and left her.

"How distinct it all is! I can see the ships in the port," said Miss Jones. "I can count the houses and there is a carriage rolling along the marina. What is that tower?"

"That," replied Ninu, "is the monastero."

"But it must be that lovely tower with the carved wood shutters and bands of green tiles."

"Yes," replied the boy: "that is where my aunt lives, my father's sister."

"If only we could sketch the whole view from here," said Miss Jones.

"Ah yes," I said, "if——"

As we were neither of us ambitious enough to make the attempt, we found shady places from which to sketch bits of the Cyclopæan wall.

"I shall be all right," said Mrs. Jones as we passed her. "Please don't trouble about me."

So the rest of the morning was occupied until Ninu became restless, which we construed into an intimation that it was lunch-time. He had thought of everything and had chosen a convenient and shady spot for luncheon. He produced a cold chicken, bread, cheese, fennel, and a bottle of wine, all very light and Sicilian and quite enough even with the addition to our party; for food at a Sicilian picnic, if it is enough for a given number, is sure to be enough for one more—it is not like mules. There was a caserma close by and, as we had no water, Ninu went off to see if he could get any from the carabinieri who occupied it. While he was gone Mrs. Jones said:

"By the way, Edith dear, I forgot to tell you before, but last night, after Mr. Jones had deserted us and you had gone to bed and left me all alone on the veranda, I had visitors—as I suppose I may say. That is, Mrs. Smith and her daughter passed through with the Robinsons and Mrs. Robinson introduced them; they had been dining with them and you never noticed them in the dining-room. However, we had quite a nice chat and Mrs. Smith asked me to consider it as a call. I thought it so sweet of her, without waiting to be asked or anything. So informal and friendly. Such nice people. So interesting and intelligent—both of them—people one can

enjoy talking to. I don't wonder at your making friends with such delightful people, Edith dear. The daughter must be very clever because she has taught herself to compose."

"Well, Mamma dear," corrected Edith, "hardly taught herself. At least——"

"My dear Edith, I think I know what Mrs. Smith told me."

"Yes, Mamma dear."

"If you would try to get out of this annoying habit of constantly interrupting when I am talking, we should get on so much better."

"Yes, Mamma dear."

"Mrs. Smith told me that Blanche took a story by Miss—there now, I've forgotten the name; but it was one of those American writers and quite well known. It was all about a princess. Or was it a dragon? Something of that kind. And I thought it such a pretty idea when they told me. And Blanche made this story into a play, and wrote the music for it all by herself, and it was performed in India by the children of some friends of hers. But she found herself constantly in difficulties owing to not understanding the theory of music, I mean the thorough-bass or the counterpoint or whatever it is called. So she made inquiries and was told of a young lady, a student at the Royal College of Music, who was willing to give her lessons by correspondence, and she has been working hard at it all last winter, and when they go to England they intend to invite the young lady to stay with them for a fortnight, just to explain a few things she does not quite understand; and then she will be able to go on and do it by herself. And I shouldn't wonder if she becomes famous."

"Mamma dear, did you arrange anything about the music in the cathedral?"

"Oh yes, we are to go to-morrow morning: it's a celebration or something.

"Wouldn't it be a festa, Mamma dear?"

"Very well, call it a festa if you like. I'm sure I don't mind. Ah, here's Ninu back again. I think he is taking a very long time to get our lunch ready."

Ninu not only brought water, he brought also peaches and the carabinieri's dog came with him. About the peaches he explained that he found the carabinieri bargaining with a woman who was standing at their door with a basket full. She was taking them down to the town and they looked so fine that he had speculated in some on our account. As for the dog his name was "Che t'importa?" which means "What's it matter to you?" and he deserved it, for he was putting his nose into everything all the time. Nevertheless he was a sweet-tempered creature and made great friends with us.

Then we began our luncheon, Ninu waiting on us and he and Che t'importa? sharing our provisions. The peaches were as good as Sicilian peaches can be, which is but faint praise perhaps, for I have generally found these southern peaches as hard as apples, good for cooking but not so good for eating raw as those one gets in the north; the explanation may be that I have always been in Sicily at the wrong season for the good ones. Ninu told us that they were grown by a well-known brigand who was keeping quiet just then. He lived with his sister not far off in a house with a large garden, and the brigand's sister was the woman with the basket. She always stopped at the caserma on her way to market and supplied the carabinieri with fruit. Mrs. Jones looked shocked and

said it was most immoral, but she ate her peaches all the same, and I believe that the information as to their provenance added a piquancy to the flavour of her dessert. As our lunch proceeded the old lady became gradually quieter and quieter and, in order to keep the conversation afloat, I addressed Ninu. It is sometimes a little difficult to interest boys, but food is generally a safe subject. The peaches having been exhausted, I asked :

"And what did you have for dinner yesterday, Ninu ? "

"Half a kilo of bread," he replied, as though the question were not worth asking.

"But do you generally eat half a kilo of bread ? " I inquired.

"Half a kilo of bread in the morning," he replied, "and half a kilo of bread in the evening."

I turned to Miss Jones and said : "He is not very big, is he ? Do you think he could manage more than one kilo of bread a day ? "

"How old is he ? " inquired she.

"He must be about nineteen," I replied. "When were you born, Ninu ? "

"During the tunny fishing, in May."

"Yes, but how long ago ? "

"I shall be twenty on my next birthday."

"And have you never tasted meat before you ate some of this chicken to-day ? "

"I have eaten meat four times in my life," he said. "The first time was down at the port last year. Do you remember, Signor Enrico, I came down to see you off and you gave me two francs ? With part of that money I had dinner in a restaurant, and ate roast beef."

"Did you like it ? " I inquired.

"Very much indeed. During the year a French family came to Castellinaria in their motor-car. I was their guide while they were here, and they took me away for three days on a tour. All the time I had my meals with them. We ate consommé, fish, and beefsteak all in one evening, and the same on the other days. That was the second time. The third time was when I went to Palermo for a week last month. In one day I ate fish and veal alla Genovese; another day I ate fish and beefsteak; and so on, but meat every day.

"And the fourth time?" asked Miss Jones, who was showing much interest in this food question. Ninu turned away his head and there were tears in his voice as he replied:

"That was when my uncle died the other day."

"Oh, poor boy!" exclaimed Miss Jones. "I am so sorry. I did not know."

"We wept," said Ninu. "We all wept. Do the English weep when one dies?"

"We weep if we cannot help it," I replied, "but we do not make a ceremony of it."

"No, it was not that. I wept because of those words which they spoke to me. They told me of my uncle's life, of his piety, his charity, his suffering and his goodness."

"And was it all true, Ninu? It sounds rather like an epitaph." And I couldn't help remembering what Peppino had told me about Ninu's uncle.

"Oh, it was all true—that was why I wept. We were so busy weeping that our friends were afraid we might starve, so they cooked us a dinner and brought it to us, some broth and a beefsteak."

Ninu spoke very well, his voice was unsteady and he

seemed still to be mourning for his uncle. Miss Jones was much affected. She said :

" Do you mean to tell us that except on those four occasions you have never in your life eaten anything but bread until to-day ? "

" We have spaghetti three times a week at home with sauce made of tomatoes, and again if it is a festa."

" Then that might be four times a week ? "

" Yes, but never meat."

The heart of Miss Jones was bleeding for the poor boy and tears of compassion were trembling on her sympathetic eyelids.

" How hard they work ! " she exclaimed, " and how bravely they bear their poverty and their misery ! Do you think I might give him a franc ? "

There was a glint in Ninu's eye as though he more than half understood what she was saying and was pleased to have produced the desired effect. But I held her back :

" Let us wait till we return and then we can ask Peppino what he thinks about it."

Mrs. Jones had contributed nothing to the conversation about Ninu's food ; glancing in her direction now I saw that she was nodding her head and was half-asleep. Edith undertook to see that she was comfortable, so she found her a seat in the shade, gave her a shawl and then joined Ninu and me as we were finishing our cigarettes. Miss Jones did not smoke—not even in moderation.

Then we resumed our sketches, but the morning had passed and the sun had altered the lights and shadows on our wall. There was, in fact, so little to be done in the way of continuation that we started new sketches with the afternoon light, and went on until Ninu came to

tell us that Mrs. Jones was asking if it were not time to return.

Miss Jones and I congratulated each other on the result of our efforts. We also submitted them to Ninu, who declared that he had never seen anything so beautiful, and begged us to give them to him ; he said that, if they were his, he should have them framed and should hang them up over his bed, one on each side of his picture of the Madonna di Castellinaria. Somehow we did not feel inclined to accede to his flattering request and sent him off to make ready the mules. Mrs. Jones was scarcely awake, but she was sufficiently on the spot to know that she ought to appear to take an interest in what was going on.

" I think you might show me what you've been doing," she said.

We handed her our sketches. She looked at them in silence, turned them over, looked at them again. Then she said :

" Very pretty. And is that all ? Well, it does you great credit. As for yours, Edith dear, neither of them is perhaps quite the view I should have expected you to choose. I have seen other sketches of yours which—still I must say I think—yes, if you were to carry them a little further—finish them, in fact—I don't know that they would be so bad. And now shall we be getting back ? "

Chapter 17 Science

NEITHER Mrs. nor Miss Jones appeared at dinner, so I had our table to myself and the benefit of all Rista's attention. And he was extremely attentive. I afterwards discovered that he had been making inquiries about me from Peppino, who had given me a good character. While I was helping myself to one of the dishes, he said :

" I was not always a waiter."

" No ? " I replied, " and what used you to be ? "

" I had an equestrian circus."

It was a new experience for me to be waited upon by one of those scarcely mortal beings who ride standing up on a barebacked horse and jump through hoops. When he returned with the next dish, I continued :

" And can you jump through hoops ? "

" No," he said, smiling modestly. " I cannot do that. But I can ride a barebacked horse."

" Why did you give it up ? "

" It was the war in Tripoli. I cannot tell you about it now ; it is too long and there is a soufflé to-night, I must be ready for it. If you are free this evening, I will tell you."

But after dinner I was caught by Mrs. Jones, who had been dining upstairs with her daughter. She intended to spend the evening in the veranda knitting, Miss

Jones was not coming down and all the other guests had gone out to look at the moon, which she considered a most foolish proceeding. So I got Rista to postpone our interview to some other evening, and devoted myself to Mrs. Jones.

"When I say it is a foolish proceeding," said Mrs. Jones, "of course I only mean on the grounds of health, which must always be one's first consideration."

"You mean, I suppose, that they may find it a bit chilly after the heat of the day."

"Precisely. They are certain to take cold. It's what is called—I forget just now what it is called, but there is a scientific expression for when you do one thing and another is sure to follow. Now about the moon; as I was going to say, I don't know whether astronomy interests you at all, I take the deepest interest in it myself —always did, though I am the only one of my family that takes any interest in science. I always read *Nature*. I take it in. I find it such a resource. Besides, one must keep up with the times. Of course you are aware of the extraordinary influence which the sun's atmosphere has upon the weather on the earth? Now when certain planets are in propinquity—I think that is what they call it; but these Greek names are rather difficult to remember; I can generally manage the Latin ones because, you see, my father was a schoolmaster——"

"Really!" I exclaimed. "And my grandfather was a schoolmaster."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Jones, "that's quite another coincidence, how very strange! Well, and my father taught me Latin, but he did not teach me Greek. Now Edith was taught both; yes, I thought it so much better. Perhaps the word I want is *transitu*. Let's say it is that

till we can ask Edith to rub up her Greek a little for us. Very well, then, when certain planets are *in transitu* the atmosphere of the sun is disturbed, and at those times the weather is most prejudicial to animal life. Do you remember one year lately how dreadfully the sheep were dying ? "

" I remember reading about it in the papers. You mean in the summer, don't you ? "

" Yes, it was the summer. I'm sure all round us in the country the people lost their sheep by thousands—literally by thousands. It was so bad that really you might almost say they were decimated. The reason, of course, was that Jupiter was then in occultation—yes, I've remembered the word now, in occultation, that's it—and very bright he was. Every one was saying how bright he was. I looked at him through a telescope—oh, I know what you are thinking, but it was a warm evening, I remember ; and besides, I took a shawl—and really he was a most beautiful object in the midnight sky, as they call it. Next year it will be some other planet, Orion I think ; or will it be Andromeda ? I forget. But it will be sure to be one of them, and it doesn't matter which because the papers will tell us in time. All these things are perfectly well known now. People travel about the world looking at the eclipses, and that's how they find out about the atmosphere of the sun and things of that kind, and then they explain it all in *Nature*."

" Astronomy is very interesting," I agreed, " but I quite see your point that it is a risky pursuit in a changeable climate and, of course, health is the supreme consideration. If people will go out in the night air they must expect to catch cold ; it is cause and effect."

" Did you say that on purpose ? If so, it was very

polite of you; because it is the expression I could not remember just now. Cause and effect. I wonder why I did not remember it. I was always so fond of cause and effect—yes, and of subjunctive and objunctive too. I'm sure they used to keep me awake night after night when I was attending those lectures at the Royal Institution."

"By the by," I said, "talking of illness, I trust that our excursion to-day was not too much for Miss Jones. I understand that she is not very strong."

"She is often like that," replied her mother. "A slight fatigue, nothing of any consequence. She is very strong, never really ill—at least, well hardly that. No, I cannot say that; and formerly, of course, she was delicate, so delicate as a child that the doctors all thought I should never rear her. But it just shows what can be done by care and attention. And I am sure Edith had every care and every attention, all the best advice, every kind of treatment, and medicine and baths and massage—nothing, in fact, has been neglected that money could procure. I really couldn't say how many doctors have seen her; so many that now I am not in the least anxious, which is just as well because I depend so entirely upon her for everything."

Mrs. Jones seemed inclined to go on talking and I had nothing to do but to sit and listen. I was allowed to smoke, though at first I was afraid to begin, partly because I remembered that she only approved of smoking in moderation, and I never know what people mean by moderation when they apply it to something I want to do, and partly because of a notice over the door. But she wished me to be comfortable and recommended me to consult the waiter about the notice. I rang and Rista came,

which rather surprised me because it was his evening out.

"Please, Rista, may I smoke?"

"Certainly."

"But there is that notice over the door."

Rista looked up and read it: "'Visitors are requested not to smoke in the veranda.' That is all right," said he, striking a match. "That only applies to visitors who do not want to smoke."

So he lighted my cigarette for me and disappeared.

"I sometimes think it strange," continued the old lady, "when I remember what a number of doctors I have had to do with. And yet I don't know, for, as I was saying, I always had a great love of science—quite a vocation, as the phrase is. There was Sir Theodore Bartholomew, who came to see my dear husband when he broke his leg; a very courtly man, Sir Theodore—oh, a very courtly man, and always so nice and kind. And Dr. Mansfield Forbes, who came to see my poor son Charlie. I remember it was on the Saturday and he said to me: 'Well, Mrs. Jones, it's nearly over, he can't live another four-and-twenty hours. I should like to come to-morrow just to see how it goes on.' And so he came on the Sunday, merely to inquire—no fee, oh dear no, no fee. I thought it so nice and kind of him, a man in a large practice, such as his was, to give up his Sunday afternoon just to come and inquire."

Here we were interrupted by Rista, who came to ask if he should bring tea for two. Mrs. Jones always took tea in the evening and, as I felt that a little refreshment would be welcome, I told him to bring tea for two.

"Really that young man does look most unhealthily pale," said Mrs. Jones. "I am sure he ought to change the treatment."

"Is he being treated for anything?" I asked innocently.

"Oh I know nothing about him," she replied, "but he does not look well. And he is very thin—much too thin. It is probably that excessive smoking. But let me see. Oh yes, I was going to tell you about Dr. Duncan Forbes, the brother of Dr. Mansfield; both very eminent in the profession. I went to see Dr. Duncan with Mary Toovey —that was another case—rheumatism this time. She asked me to go with her—I suppose she thought I had had a little experience with medical men. People do think I know something about it. I remember Dr. Attenborough saying to me years ago: 'Well, Mrs. Jones, you know quite as much as any of us.' And I replied: 'All that I know, Dr. Attenborough, you have taught me.' But then I was so much interested in it that if there was anything I did not understand I used to look it up in the book. You may say that other people might have done the same, but it isn't everybody who is really interested."

She paused invitingly, and I obediently said: "And perhaps it isn't every one who has the aptitude."

"Oh well," she replied deprecatingly, "I would not say that of myself."

Here we were interrupted again, this time by the arrival of the tea.

"Would you like me to pour it out?" I asked.

"Oh, if you would be so kind," she said. "You see I'm knitting. I find it such a resource and it does not try my eyes. Not any sugar for me, thank you. I never touch it. My old friend, Sir William, entirely forbade it. And now I see we have lost him. Oh, I think I told you."

At this point, or somewhere hereabouts, I became more interested in my tea and my cigarette than in the reminiscences, and I am afraid I missed a good deal. At last we were finally interrupted by the return of the other guests who had finished looking at the moon, and I was able to leave Mrs. Jones with a lady who had drifted in and sat beside her. In the corridor I encountered Rista and said to him :

" But I thought it was your evening out, Rista ? "

" As you could not come," he replied, " I changed with Luigi ; if it suits you I shall be free to-morrow."

" All right," I said. " And I will keep the appointment this time without fail. Good night."

About half an hour later I passed through the veranda on my way to bed, and stopped to pick up the *Corriere di Castellinaria*. I took it to a seat and was looking for the latest news from England when, through the open door that led into the salone, I heard a voice :

" . . . he inquired the child's age, and when he heard she was sixteen he said : ' Well then, I think we can effect a cure ; but she must follow the treatment.' "

" It's Rosie Beamish," I said to myself. " If I keep quiet, perhaps I shall hear about the treatment this time."

The voice continued : " She had to spend—I forget how long, something like eight hours every day—in a bath. Fortunately she was staying with friends who happened to have a bath and was able to do it, and in six months her eczema was much better—really much better. It's true she had a return of it three weeks later, but it had yielded to treatment. It's what I always say : Make proper inquiries, go to the right man, follow his treatment and you will derive benefit."

Chapter 18 Poesia

NEXT morning Peppino, having an hour or so off, took me for a walk. On the way he said: "And how is your dolce cuore, your sweetheart?"

"Who is my dolce cuore, Peppino?"

"Oh ah! Ninu he tell me about you and the signorina inglese. Ah! when shall be the wedding?"

"You must not be in such a hurry."

"If to form the intention, better to be doing."

"There are a good many things to be considered before one proposes, and I have not formed any intention."

"The signorina inglese she expect. Always the woman it is expecting. And if the man don't be asking, then is the woman very hating."

"But, Peppino, she is such a poor little thing; so crushed and reduced to nothing. If I could be sure she would say 'no' I might chance it, just to pay the compliment. What do you think? Would it be safe?"

"The life it is the risk. Coraggio!"

"Yes, but some risks are too serious to be taken. Now if I had Rista's advantages there would be no risk about it, it would be a certainty."

"Then the signorina inglese accept the compliment and refuse the marriage."

"Not at all. I have no doubt that she would accept

both, and especially the marriage, if I had Rista's advantages. At least she would want to. She is fascinated by his curly golden hair, his confiding blue eyes and his aristocratic manners."

"All the ladies are telling the same about Rista."

"But I was not thinking of marriage. I was thinking of something you told me once."

"What was I telling ?"

"You gave me some advice. You said, 'If to be seeking the joy in the dictionary of the people that is married, it is a word that is not—what is it ?—it is a word that is an old expression, no longer used in that dictionary.'"

"Ah yes," he replied, "but with love things it is all different. Excuse me ; the true love it is like the—what is this little fiery beast that is jumping in the air during the night-time ? No, it is not like this. The true love it is like the lanterna, very useful to take in the dark room. The false love it is like the beast with the fire in his coda —his tail—that is escaping and is telling : 'Please come !' and you spoil yourself, but you don't be arriving to catch him. And if to catch, then is he useful not at all. Did you understand ?"

"Yes," I replied, "that's about it."

"Then why to don't marry the signorina inglese ?"

"Because there is no lanterna ; there is not even a little fiery beast. I say, Peppino, suppose there were to be a lanterna, and she told her mother she wanted to marry, wouldn't there be an awful row ! But it's quite out of the question. She can no longer call her soul her own, poor little thing ! Do you know that she has devoted her life to looking after her mother ? She reads to her. And, besides, she does the flowers. Her mother

told me so. Sometimes one meets with devotion like that in English families, but it is not always that the daughter really enjoys the life. I did want to talk to you about the signorina inglese all the same. I want you to explain to her about Ninu." And I told him how poor Ninu never ate meat.

Peppino said: "This is a thing not too difficult to explain. This is like the devotion of the daughter."

"How can Ninu's food be like the devotion of the daughter?"

"This is the—how speak you the poesia? Excuse me, it is the lie. To make the poesia the truth it is necessary not at all."

"Don't you believe it? Don't you believe what Ninu says about his food? And don't you believe what the signorina inglese says about her mother either? As for Ninu, the young ruffian told us himself."

"Of course, yes. The Sicilian shall be telling always the poesia. Also the boy, the young man. Also the grown man. Also the—excuse me—the signorina inglese she tell you herself?"

"The mother said it, and the daughter confirmed her."

"Also the English lady," added Peppino, completing his list.

"Well," I said, "I should like to know what Miss Jones really thinks about this devotion."

"She is thinking what I am telling. Look here. The prepotenza of the mother it is not agreeable to the little, poor thing and she can don't be moving away. Always she must be telling: 'Yes, Mamma dear'; always she must be seeming to be in happiness, but it is happiness not at all. This is the poesia."

"In fact," I said, "she is leading a double life, one thing to herself, another thing to the world."

"The poesia it is the deception. But if to be leading the true life then the mother to be very worse, plenty more prepotenza. This is not a good thing."

"You mean to say she puts on the poesia as a kind of shield?"

"The poesia of the signorina inglese it is the concealment for protection."

"And is Ninu's poesia also concealment for protection?"

"The poesia of Ninu it is the business of the mendicante—how do you say the begging man?"

"Well, but his going to Palermo? Was that another lie?"

"Not the lie. Ninu was sparing the money and was escaping to Palermo and his father was in sorrow and was using the telegraph: 'Please Mr. Policeman be finding Ninu.' And many days are passing without to find. And a cousin is meeting Ninu by fortune in the Via Maqueda: 'Please come home, Ninu.' And is coming home with the cousin, and the family is weeping to receive him."

"What a young devil!"

"It is the devil not at all. It is the boy—the young man. It is the—how speak you this grain that shall be in the field? No, not the farina, this other grain; excuse me, perhaps it is the orzo—the barley; it is the young man that shall be planting the savage barley. Did you understand?"

"Yes, that would explain it. But young men grow out of that; he will settle down in time."

Ninu, it seems, picks up a good deal of money one way

and another in the course of the year. That is how he was able to save enough to run away to Palermo. His father is a plasterer and is never out of work. They are fairly well off and if they really do not eat meat at home, it is only because they prefer to save the cost of it. But nothing would induce Peppino to believe that they never eat meat at home.

The question now arose whether I ought to pass on Peppino's opinion to Miss Jones. He was strongly against my doing so.

"The signorina inglese," he said, "shall better keep the illusione. She shall be agreeable to make to be flowing away the tears with sorrow for Ninu. But if to know the true history, then to don't be flowing away the tears; this is not a good thing. When the tears it is ready, then must be flowing away or shall be coming the malady."

"She wants to give him a franc to buy a dinner with. What am I to tell her? Hadn't you better come with me and invent some poesia to support Ninu's lie? You would do it better than I should."

"Come on," replied Peppino.

On the way we passed a trattoria, kept by one of Ninu's cousins, and there I spied the boy at a table in a dark corner eating a beefsteak.

I said, "Buon appetito, Ninu."

"Thank you," replied Ninu; but he looked rather embarrassed and added, "I say, Signor Enrico, please you need not tell the English lady that you saw me eating a beefsteak."

"Of course not, Ninu. Why should I tell her that? If I tell her anything it had better be something plausible. How would it do if I told her that I saw you eating half a kilo of bread?"

Soon after passing the trattoria we overtook Mrs. and Miss Jones. They graciously allowed us to accompany them to the albergo.

"We have been to the cathedral," said Mrs. Jones. "What a beautiful cathedral you have in your town, Signor Pampalone; so classical, and so many styles of architecture, Gothic and Byzantine and Elizabethan and——"

"Mamma dear, are you sure Mrs. Smith said Elizabethan?"

"Well, if she didn't say that, what did she say? I'm sure she mentioned several styles, and you must admit that the cathedral is quite beautiful enough to be Elizabethan, except for the artificial flowers upon the high altar."

"Yes, Mamma dear; I know you never approve of them."

"Of course not, my dear. But it was the singing we went particularly to hear."

"I hope you were not disappointed?" I asked.

"Not in the least; it was just as I said; all done without any music—merely singing. I don't know that the voices blended particularly well, not like when those two girls used to sing duets after dinner at Vevey with a guitar and a mandoline. But then of course they were sisters, and I think sisters' voices always do blend so beautifully."

I agreed that sisters' voices always do blend so beautifully. "And did you miss the organ?" I inquired.

"No," she replied, "I did not miss anything. Blanche Smith said they were singing in parts, and perhaps that made a difference. I mean it is not the same as duets, is it? She said there were four parts, but I should say

there must have been more than four—five or six I should think. It sounded so rich that I didn't mind the voices not blending. It was so—what I call sonorous. Really it was difficult to believe there was no organ. Blanche Smith says it was one of the Latin anthems, she thinks they are so much better. But then, of course, she's a musician."

By this time we had reached the albergo and Peppino came in with us. The ladies began questioning him about his life in England, asking him specially how he liked London. Peppino always enjoys talking about London. He said it was troublesome at first, but after a time he managed very well.

"When I was in London and was going to this place, the first place I live in London, where was the letter from my mother, I take the train and the train was moving and the guard-man he says to me, 'Now you shall be fined for taking the train that is already moving.' And I was telling that I don't be knowing the language of his country and don't understand that it is prohibited to enter the moving train. And the guard-man he was very kind and was telling: 'If to be travelling around the world it is better be learning the language before to leave the home.'"

Miss Jones presently introduced the subject of Ninu, intending to lead up to the food difficulty; but Peppino, instead of allowing her to approach it, told her all about Ninu's parents and relations, referring incidentally to his aunt in the monastero. When they understood that this aunt was actually a nun, the ladies, forgetting all about the interesting main subject, had to be told all about the still more interesting subsidiary one.

Put shortly it came to this, that Ninu's aunt entered

the monastero at the age of thirteen ; she was now sixty-nine, so that she had been immured for fifty-six years. At the time she entered, her brother, Ninu's father, was one year old and, as a baby, had often been passed in to the monastery through a revolving doorway so that his sister might play with him for an hour or two.

" Then do the nuns receive visitors ? " asked Miss Jones.

" Never shall a visitor enter the monastero," replied Peppino, " never, never, never. Neither shall the woman be going on the streets ; always inside, till shall be coming the death."

" But the baby ? "

" Then is necessary the blinding of the eye to the baby."

" How horrible ! " exclaimed Miss Jones. " It's bad enough to shut the old lady up, but fancy blinding the poor baby ! "

" No, no," I said, " Ninu's father is not blind—he didn't mean that. Peppino, you mean that the authorities wink at the introduction of the baby, don't you ? "

" Of course, yes. But when to be having four years then shall the mother be telling to the bishop : ' Please Mr. Bishop make me the pleasure to—' how do you speak firmare ? Excuse me, it is to make the signature, the permesso for the entry of the old baby. Also of the lady. Also of the man, if it is the father or the brother and the religious woman shall be sick. But if to be asking this person, the bishop shall be replying, ' Yes ' ; and if to be asking that other person, then ' No.' Very uncertain. It is all—how say you ?—ah, yes ; it is all go and touch."

" I suppose they must be strict in a convent," said Miss Jones.

"It is not convento," corrected Peppino.

"Yes," I said, "I've fallen into that trap before now. In this part of the world they call it a convent when it is for men and a monastery when it is for women. Everything is so different in Sicily."

"And this is the monastero which Ninu showed us?" asked Miss Jones.

"It is in the street where is the pescheria, the market of the fish; and the tower it is high; and the window it is cluded with lacework of wood heavily laboured."

"Yes, that's it," said Miss Jones. "Can't we get the bishop to give us a permesso, and won't Ninu take us to see his aunt?"

"Look here," said Peppino, "I shall be telling Ninu, and Ninu shall be telling the mother, and the mother shall be telling the aunt, and the aunt shall be telling the abadessa, and the abadessa shall be telling the lady: 'Please come to the parlatorio—not to enter'; and the religious woman—the aunt—shall be coming and shall be speaking in the grille."

Chapter 19 Rista

THAT evening at dinner I told the ladies that, with their permission, I should leave them early to go and keep my appointment with Rista.

"Then do take the opportunity," said Mrs. Jones, "of finding out who is his doctor. I am sure there must be something wrong with the treatment, or perhaps it is the smoking. These Sicilians all smoke too much. Whatever it is, I shall be pleased to speak to Dr. Barrabini if he wishes it. And there is your other friend, Signor Pampalone; I noticed him particularly this morning, and I must say I think he looks far from well. Are you sure he is receiving proper advice? As you are so intimate with him you might ask him who is his doctor."

I said it was very kind of her to take so much interest in Peppino and Rista, and promised to find out what they were doing about medical advice.

Then I bade the ladies good night, and went and found Rista in the caffè we had agreed upon. I offered him a cigarette, and asked what he would like to drink. He said he did not smoke; he had tried once, years ago, and it had made him sick, so he had never repeated the experiment. As for drinking, he had not drunk wine for many years and intended never to drink it again. He accepted a cup of coffee, and I asked him whether he thought the waiter who brought it looked as though he could jump through hoops.

He smiled indulgently and said: "You must not suppose that every waiter has had an equestrian circus."

"Before you begin," I said, "please explain your name. It is a very uncommon name for a Sicilian, isn't it?"

"I am not a Sicilian," he said.

"Not a Sicilian!" I exclaimed. "Well, I thought your hair was very light for a Sicilian. What are you?"

"I am a Serbian; my home is in Belgrade and my name is Cristo Zoukitsh. I was born in December, and in my country all boys born in December are baptized Cristo. But my parents did not like me to use that name in daily life, so they shortened it into Rista. I shall be twenty-two next December."

"Only twenty-two! and how long did you have the circus? You must have been rather young to be in business."

"I was fourteen when I left home, but I did not have the circus at once. My mother was cruel to me. I told my parents that if she did not treat me better I should leave. She went on being cruel. I got up early one morning, opened my father's desk, took forty thousand francs [£1,600 sterling] and went away. I can speak English if you like, and French. Also German, Russian, Serbian, Turkish, Roumanian, and modern Greek, besides Italian."

"Now I understand what you mean when you say you were not always a waiter. You mean you were a thief?"

"Thief! well, if you like to say thief—I don't know. You call that being a thief? You must remember it was my father's money I took. I have never taken money from any one else. My father has a large business. He has been carrying it on for many years. He supplies carpets to the Sultan of Turkey. In the time of the late

Sultan he was made a Bey, that is the same thing as being a Count. He is very rich. If I had stayed at home he would have spent more than forty thousand francs upon me by this time. No, my father has not lost that money."

"I suppose you are ashamed to go home now."

"Not at all. My father wants me to go home. He sent me three hundred francs to go home."

"Then why did you remain here as a waiter?"

"Me! Go home with my father's money and nothing in my pocket, like a beggar! No. When I go home I shall pay my own journey and arrive with my pockets full."

"Your father's three hundred francs will come in useful in helping to fill your pockets. Did you put his money in the bank?"

"Of course not. I sent it back to him and told him not to insult me."

"How much money have you got now?"

"One hundred and four francs, and it is not in the bank. I have given it to Signor Pampalone to take care of for me."

"When you left home at fourteen with forty thousand francs, did not your father send the police after you?"

"I don't know what my father did. I went to Paris. I did not hear from the police. I did not see them. In Paris I went to a great restaurant for supper, and there were ladies—beautiful ladies in silk with gold and diamonds. They came and sat at my table and ordered supper and gave me champagne. When the waiter woke me up with the bill it was six o'clock in the morning and I did not see any ladies. One thousand francs to pay."

"Rather extravagant."

"It was the ladies' supper. I was not extravagant. I did not understand. I was fourteen. It was a trap."

"It was hardly the way your father would have spent money upon you. Still it might have been worse. I do not know whether you might have had to go to prison if you had not paid the bill."

"Perhaps. And that is the last time I drank wine. I went to Smyrna and there I found my circus—horses, tents, furniture, scenery, harness, and all the performers. I paid them every week, and we travelled until last year. We travelled in Greece, in Asia, in Macedonia, in Turkey, in Bulgaria, in Crete and many islands and I became friends with Maria."

"Who is Maria?" I asked.

"Maria is a very beautiful girl and we were engaged to be married. We embraced in the tent in the dark after the performance every night. And then a rich man came, and Maria went with him and left me alone. And the war broke out in Tripoli and many men went to fight—Turks and Italians both—and no one was left in the town to see or to ride, all gone to the war. Also no horses—all gone to the war."

"So I suppose you sold everything that was left?"

"There was no one to buy—all gone to the war——"

"The circus melted away, in fact," I said, "like the ladies in the Parisian restaurant. Do you intend to remain here as a waiter?"

"No. In Sicily there is no money. I intend to go to America. I have a brother in America with a business, doing very well. If I had fifty francs more I would go to London and get a place in a hotel—with all my languages that ought not to be difficult. Then I should soon save enough money to join my brother in America."

Chapter 20 The Monastero

AS Rista and I left the caffè and returned to the hotel it began to rain, we only just got in in time; and in the night there was a tremendous thunder-storm. Next morning Miss Jones and I were comparing notes about it while we waited for Ninu to come and take us to the monastero. Mrs. Jones had not slept at all, and her poor daughter had been up most of the night listening to her complaints.

"My dear, you mustn't think of going to that convent to-morrow if it's like this. And you've no umbrella. You've never had it mended. So rash of you to go all these days without having it mended. Why, it might have rained at any moment and you might have been drenched. I do wish you would acquire a system. Now promise me, Edith dear, that the very next time you go out the first thing you do will be to find a man and have it mended, else you'll be catching your death of cold, and what shall I do then? You really ought to think of me occasionally and not always be so entirely wrapped up in yourself. It's something very like ingratitude after all the money that has been spent on your education and health and advancement in life and one thing and another."

Miss Jones did not quote her mother as having used exactly these words, but I gathered that some such speech had been addressed to her. When morning came it was seen not only that the storm was over but that it was a perfectly brilliant day; so Miss Jones

was allowed out and dutifully brought the umbrella.

As soon as Ninu arrived we asked if he knew a man who could safely be entrusted with the job, and he took us slightly out of our course to an umbrella-mender who exercised his mystery in part of the ground floor of a palazzo. This artificer grasped the sufferer firmly in one hand, and with the other behaved to it in a manner so extremely familiar that all the other umbrellas in the shop blushed. Having diagnosed its complaint, he did something like stopping a tooth, only he used wire and tweezers. He talked the whole time while we looked on admiring his dexterity. He told us he had five brothers in America, one a shoemaker, one a goldsmith, one a barber, one a waiter, and one an artist like himself, that is, a maker and mender of umbrellas. I should rather have called him a conjurer, but, after all, artists and conjurers have much in common. He said he had predicted the storm, and he now predicted another for the following night. An umbrella-maker ought to know something about the weather and, if of a cheerful temperament, may be expected to take a view suitable to his business. Miss Jones hoped he might be too sanguine, and that the Padre Eterno would kindly let us have a little peace for the next night. The umbrella-mender replied that rain was wanted for the country, and that the Padre Eterno had nothing to do with it. Rain, he said, is an affair of nature. On my asking whether there was not some connexion between nature and the Padre Eterno, he declared that there was none. He had read about it in a book, a printed book, and did not believe there was any Padre Eterno at all. Miss Jones looked shocked, but he noticed nothing. His notion of God, he said, was money. I said that I had met many of his co-religionists,

but that few of them expressed their creed so clearly and so openly. In his practice, however, he did not act up to his profession, for, when he had completed the cure of the umbrella, he declined to make any charge. Miss Jones was puzzled, Ninu looked as though he held the key to the enigma but refused to explain, and I promised to get Peppino to put the matter straight.

After this preliminary adventure we went on to the monastero, where we were received in the parlatorio by Ninu's aunt. This parlatorio is not considered to be within the precincts, it is scarcely more than a porch where visitors are received. There was a double grille with a space of a foot or two between. In the wall on each side of the grille was a revolving door or cupboard ; it was like four corner cupboards with their corners meeting and revolving on the join, or like those circular revolving doors which they have in modern hotels for keeping the draught out. The old lady appeared behind the grille—a frail, timid, little person—and, after the first greetings, we asked whether that was the revolving door through which Ninu's father had been passed.

"Yes," she replied, "and also Ninu when he was a baby."

She told us all about the regulations of the monastero. There have been as many as thirty nuns, but now they are reduced to ten and as they die their places are not filled. They get up at six and attend Mass, and one of the nuns plays the organ. At nine they have breakfast—coffee, bread, olives, cheese. Then they work, each in her own private room, making lace, sweet pastry, and artificial flowers for the altar. At twelve they have dinner which consists of about a pound of meat among six persons, one small fish each, about the size of a sardine, and as much bread as they like. Also they have wine, water and sweet

cakes. No talking is permitted during dinner, but some one reads aloud *The Lives of the Saints*. After dinner there is an interval of freedom during which they take a siesta. From four to five they pray; from five to six they work; at six they have Benedictions in chapel; tell their beads till seven, when they have supper; and at eight they go to bed, all in one very large dormitory.

The abbess is a lady of birth and is spoken of as the Abadessa Nobile. They have had nuns of great learning, and one of them taught Ninu's aunt Latin. She has forgotten everything that she knew before she went in. She has never been outside the walls, but she has looked through the latticed windows into the street and has seen a bicycle and a motor; from the top of the tower she can see the sea with sails on it and the ships unloading in the port; she can see the great mountain; also she can see the trains, but they are too far off for her to make much of them. She has heard that a flying man is coming to Castellinaria in about a fortnight, and she hopes to catch sight of him when he is performing. They have three servants among each five nuns, and it is not too many because the rooms are spacious. They take vows of Castità, Povertà and Clausura Perpetua. And Castità is construed quite literally—no widow is admitted.

The grille on the monastero side was of wood with quite large openings, on our side it was of metal with small openings. When we were preparing to withdraw, the old lady put her arm through one of the large openings in her grille and seemed to expect something. Ninu told us to put our fingers through the small openings on our side. We did so, she reached across the intervening space, touched our fingers with her hand, and muttered a few words. Thus she dismissed us with her blessing.

Chapter 21 Goats' Milk

PEPPINO and I were in the veranda smoking and talking about the monastero and the crime of shutting children up in such a place and feeding them on *The Lives of the Saints* till they die. He replied that this is no longer done. The eldest nun is ninety; when the numbers have been reduced by death to four or five the survivors will be turned out and given a franc a day each. The monastero and the ground will then be taken over by the government which has already acquired it. That did not seem to be a satisfactory conclusion. I said something about thwarting all the woman's natural instincts and casting what remains of her loose on the world. Ninu's poor old aunt has lived a life devoid of experiences—if that can be called life. Even her worries and anxieties have been reduced to a minimum. She is hardly more than a child after all these years, and will be less fit to return to life at seventy than she was to leave it at thirteen. In these cases it seems that the nun is usually taken by her relations. Ninu's father will probably receive his sister into his house—a legacy from the Church.

Then Peppino began: Look at the English ladies; look at Miss Jones. Will not she be turned loose on the world when her mother dies? And what about her fitness for life and her natural instincts? Has not she been sacrificed to that old woman as much as Ninu's aunt

has been sacrificed to the Madonna ? And he would not allow that Miss Jones could take any credit for keeping her mother alive.

" The old mamma it is very well, thank you," he said, " it is, how do you say the—excuse me, it is the imaginary malade, and the nurse it is necessary not at all. It is the little, poor thing that is the suffering malade."

" Ah, you think it is the signorina who wants all those doctors and a nurse to take care of her. That is because you do not know what care and attention she has had ; all the best doctors, all the best advice and baths and treatment and——"

" No, no."

" But Peppino, her mother told me so."

" Of course, yes. But it is necessary not the doctors, not the nurses, not the medicines ; for the signorina it is necessary three things other. Number one, it is the liberty ; number two, it is the young gentleman friend excuse me, it is the husband ; number three, it is the baby ; or boy or girl, I do not care ; it is necessary the baby."

" Ah ! you are thinking of Brancaccia."

" Very well. And Brancaccia, is she unhappy ? "

" Not at all. Nor is Peppino. You are the two happiest people that I know."

" And Ricuzzu also, and the other babies."

" Yes, yours is a really happy family."

Mrs. and Miss Jones suddenly invaded the veranda and Mrs. Jones, in a flutter, sank exhausted into a chair.

" We've been to see that dreadful Mrs. Smith," she exclaimed, " to return her call, you know ; and there was only goats' milk with the tea, and I do so detest goats' milk ; they used to give it to us in that horrid hotel at

Cadenabbia and it always made me ill. I wish I had not drunk my tea. I feel just as I used to feel at Cadenabbia. Mrs. Smith has been recommended to take goats' milk. I can't think who her doctor can be, not Dr. Barrabini I'm sure. It is so excessively rude of people to have people to tea and then not provide proper things for them. It isn't the way I was brought up, nor any of my children. Let them have goats' milk for themselves by all means, but they ought to provide something that won't poison their friends. And then there was no bread and butter, only sweet cakes, and you know I do so detest anything sweet. And I was put in a chair with my face to the light, and Mrs. Smith is deaf, and I had to shout to her, and that horrid Blanche was making such a noise on the piano all the time playing her own compositions, and Edith thinks the young lady student will have to stay much longer than a fortnight before Blanche's musical education is finished. I am so glad to get back again. Edith, my dear, you must be more careful; you do make friends with such extraordinary people. You really must not go about picking up just anybody you happen to meet like this."

"Yes, Mamma dear."

"Of course, now, we cannot prevent their calling if they insist, and we shall have to give them tea I suppose; but if that old lady thinks I'm going to get in a supply of goats' milk just for her she'll find she's very much mistaken."

And as I took Peppino away I wondered whether the sheltered life in the monastero had shielded Ninu's aunt from ever having anything similar to endure.

"Talking of goats' milk, Peppino," I said, "didn't you tell me that all the milk in Castellinaria is goats' milk?"

"No milk of the cow in Castellinaria. All people are drinking the milk of the goat for the exception of the milk of the cow coming in the box of metal from Milano."

"I wonder whether it really is the smoking or whether perhaps it may be the goats' milk."

"What is the smoking or the goats' milk?"

"Why, I wonder which it is that makes you so ill, Peppino. And Rista. And Ninu too."

"And you too," retorted Peppino. "The old lady she says to me: 'Poor Mr. Jones, very ill. Bad doctor and too much smoking. Speak to him about it, Signor Pampalone.'"

"It seems to me we are all in the same boat. I've got to find out who is your doctor, Peppino. You must not go to the first one whose name you see written up; you must make proper inquiries, go to a good man, follow his treatment and you will derive benefit."

"Yes; and in three weeks shall be departing the benefit and shall be returning the malady. Thank you very much."

"That sounds as though you had been listening behind doors and round corners and had overheard about Rosie Beamish."

"Not behind the door, not round the corner. The old lady she tell me in the salone."

"I believe she tells every one."

"Of course, yes."

"I should like to know how you manage about a doctor, all the same, Peppino? You must want one sometimes, if not for yourself, then for one of the family."

"When Ricuzzu is in viaggio—how do you say? is to be born, I am asking to Dr. Barrabini 'Please come quickly.' And is coming Dr. Barrabini. But Ricuzzu

he is coming more quickly. 'Good-bye Doctor, please come quickly, quickly next time.' And next time, same thing. Too late. Doctor no use in my house."

"So that it cannot very much matter who your doctor is. Now about the goats' milk. The old lady thinks she is going to be ill because of what she drank at Mrs. Smith's. If she finds out that she has been drinking goats' milk ever since she has been here, we shall want a lot more poesia or she'll be really ill; and then she'll be too much for Dr. Barrabini."

"Never mind," replied Peppino. "Very good thing for you."

"It can't matter to me," I said.

"Yes. The old lady she die; the signorina she return to the world, not too late. And you shall be telling: 'Please come; marry me.'"

"But what was that you told me about the dictionary of the married people?"

"Sometimes the people that is married is buying the new dictionary."

"Oh, ah! You were using an old edition. That was in the days before you asked Brancaccia to be your wife."

"Not before to ask," he said.

"Well, it was before she agreed to be your wife, and long before Ricuzzu was born. It was in the days when I gave you the ring with those English words written inside: 'God decreed and we agreed.' What have you done with it, Peppino?"

"I fetch you the ring? You shall be giving it to the signorina inglese?"

"That would hardly do. Don't you remember you said that the words meant: 'God decreed that we should never marry and we both agreed.' It was to be your

non-wedding ring. Of course you can't wear it now that you are married; and of course it won't do for an engagement ring. I don't mind buying another, but it must have different words inside it. 'Joined in one by God alone' or 'Let Love abide, God will provide.' Something that cannot have its meaning wrenched out of it. It would be as well to be prepared in case I meet any one I might like to give it to. Not Miss Jones, I think."

"Yes, Miss Jones; and then to don't be paying for mending the umbrella."

"How does the umbrella come in? By the by, you never told me what happened about that man. Did you see him? Who is he? Why did he refuse payment?"

"The man is telling that you shall don't be paying nothing."

"I don't want to pay; it is for Miss Jones to pay."

"It is the same thing. Look here. Now I shall tell you. Listen to me. The man is the cousin of Ninu and don't be asking for to pay the friends of Ninu. All people of my family are friends of Ninu—you and your fidanzata and——"

"But Miss Jones is not my fidanzata."

"Ninu he tell his cousin that you shall marry the signorina inglese. Did you understand?"

"Well, that's like Ninu's impudence!"

"Ninu he see you and the singorina inglese together, and Ninu is not a stupid boy. Ninu very intelligent. Not blind."

"But you don't believe all Ninu's poesia?"

"When the lady shall be consenting and shall be spending all the day with the gentleman in his company and the mother she is sleeping, then afterwards would be the wedding, soonly; yes, and plenty soonly."

"If that's the rule here, then Sicily is a more dangerous place than Scotland for a bachelor. And besides her mother was not asleep all the time. It was your idea that I should marry her, not mine. Now if you were to find me another Brancaccia instead of wanting to marry me to a lady who on your own showing is a liar, or at all events a protective colourist——"

"Ah! but marriage makes to be changing the character."

"I'll tell you what, Peppino; look here—suppose I get this new ring and have it ready for when the monastero is closed, and then suppose I offer it to Ninu's aunt when she comes out."

"Bravo! bravo! Very good idea."

"It's as good as yours about Miss Jones, anyway. If she were to accept me Ninu would become my nephew. He's a dear boy, and would be far more satisfactory as a nephew than Mrs. Jones as a mother-in-law. That is not saying much, perhaps, but one can't have everything."

"A very good idea. Nice wife for you. Rich; one franc a day. And young; only thirteen. Bravo!"

"She's sixty-nine."

"Excuse me; thirteen. The years it is nothing; the experience it is and the annoyance that makes to be old, not the years. She enter the monastero thirteen; no experience, no annoyance; she come out thirteen. Bravo!"

"Well, if she's still thirteen when she comes out there will be time to think it over. You'll let me know when she is free, won't you?"

"Rista will know first."

"Ah, now there! You must play fair, Peppino."

"What is this 'play fair'?"

"Well, I mean you must help me, you mustn't help Rista. He is not your compare, you know. You must not let Ninu's aunt see him before I'm ready with the ring, or you'll spoil my chance."

Peppino understood playing fair in this sense, and, as a good compare, to show his devotion to my interests, made me come with him and drink a glass of wine to the health of my future bride, the aunt of Ninu.

Chapter 22 The End of Rista

RISTA sent me post-cards from Castellinaria after I returned to London, and presently he sent them from Belgrade. He did not tell me how he paid for the journey—whether his hundred and four francs mounted up to enough for that and to fill his pockets also, or whether his father sent him some more and induced him to use it for the purpose intended. Two of his post-cards show him as manager of a hotel in Belgrade. They were taken by a friend of his, probably another waiter, and are very good photographs. He is in his bedroom; one shows him in an armchair in evening clothes; the other shows him standing in a white jacket. His general appearance is aristocratic enough to satisfy Miss Jones, it is easy to see that he is the son of a Count; but there are two disturbing details; the gold of his curly hair has come out so dark and the blue of his confiding eyes so light as to give him an expression to which I do not object, but it does not recall Rista to me, and I doubt whether she would approve of the result. But there is no knowing; it may be that the photograph preserves and enforces something in his appearance which she saw there and admired and which I missed until the photograph revealed it to me.

Everything he wrote to me was always very polite, friendly and even affectionate. He sent one card in

French, and for all his other communications he used Italian ; I could not help wondering how he would have got on had he chosen one of his other languages. When he spoke English it was less efficient even than his French, but I could not judge of his attainments in German, Turkish, Serbian, Modern Greek, Roumanian and Russian.

Here is what he wrote on three of his cards, the first two are in Italian, the third in French ; I give his actual words to show his mastery of the languages ; the letters (IV and V) are translated from his Italian.

Rista to H. F. Jones

I

Carissimo Amico Ricevi ipiu cari saluti del tuo amicho. e grazie dele cartuline lio ricevute tute. tuo caro amico Rista de Zoukitsh.

II

riceva i piu cari saluti del suo caro amicho Rista de Zoukitsh, Belgrad.

III

bocou de compleman de votr ami Rista M. Zoukitsh Caffe America Belgrad Serbia.

IV

DEAREST FRIEND,

With great pleasure I received your dear letters and your beautiful post-cards. I have no words to thank you. I am very grateful to you and have drunk to your good health. My father in the time of the ex-Sultan Abdul Hamid was made a Bei, that is to say, a Count, because he supplied the Sultan with carpets. I remember telling you this at Castellinaria. Now I have something further to tell you. Since my father did not wish to be called Bei they have made him Barone di Prisrend, so that his surname is now de Zoukitsh and I have the same surname and am entitled to be addressed as Rista de Zoukitsh. Please do not forget to put the de when you write. I desire to pay a visit to Prisrend, the ancient capital of Serbia, but for the present I cannot leave Belgrad. Before I start I shall send you my address.

I must tell you that I am here in Belgrad in the capacity of Director and Maître d'Hôtel and that the hotel is one of the first rank.

When next you go to Castellinaria please give my kind regards to Signor and Signora Pampalone and the children, also to Luigi. I should like

very much to be there now with you so that we might pass a pleasant time together. I have nothing further to say. I send you my affectionate good wishes and remain your dear friend

RISTA DE ZOUKITSH.

My acquaintance with counts and barons is rather academic than practical, but I had picked up the notion that the former rank above the latter. I suppose, however, from Rista's letter that in Turkey everything is as different as it is in Sicily, and that barons take precedence.

He continued to send me post-cards and letters, and in 1913 when I returned to Castellinaria I asked Peppino:

"And what about Rista? Wasn't all that about the equestrian circus what you call poesia?"

And he told me that it was all quite true—or nearly so. Rista, who, he said, was the best waiter he ever had, went to a circus in some town he was in after he had left home, and fell in love with Maria, one of the performers, who turned out to be the daughter of the proprietor. He joined the troupe and became engaged to this girl, so that, although he was not actually himself the proprietor, yet, as the circus belonged to the family of his fidanzata, it was fair to speak of it as his, and he was not trying to deceive me.

V

Rista to H. F. Jones

DEAREST FRIEND,

With delight I received your post-card and your letter and I thank you. I shall have great pleasure in seeing you and in spending at least three months in your company when I am on my way to join my brother in America, and I hope soon to start. I am now employed in the restaurant cars of the great European express trains; please therefore address me thus:

SIGNOR RISTA DE ZOUKITSH
Cavaliere della Corona di Romania
Maître d'Hôtel de la Compagnie Internationale
des Wagons-Lits
Belgrad.

I travel about so much that I shall be able to send you post-cards with pictures from all sorts of places. And I beg that you will be so kind as to send me some from wherever you may be, because I am making a collection of post-cards. I send you my affectionate good wishes and remain your dear friend

RISTA DE ZOUKITSH.

Rista went on sending me post-cards and letters containing communications of this nature until he went to the war in the Balkans, and then the post-cards took on a military aspect. He used to send a flight of five at a time with soldiers cooking on Christmas Eve, soldiers resting, the King of Serbia reviewing troops, captured Turkish cannon, soldiers bringing up the guns, soldiers transporting the wounded, and so on. Then he was in hospital and I heard nothing further for a long while. Then the post-cards began again. He was well and going back to the fighting. Then they stopped.

I heard nothing more, and assumed that Rista had died for his country.

Part 2 : Mount Eryx

Paris

To the Countess Russell

Chapter 23 Saint Antoine

THE war being over, it was possible to go abroad once more, and on Thursday, May 27, 1920, I started for Sicily, after nearly seven years' absence. My first stop was in Paris, where Georges met me at the Gare du Nord. We drove to the room of his friend Fernand who was absent on a holiday and had left his key and the run of his room in the care of Georges. We dined in a neighbouring restaurant, and I went to bed early.

I do not claim that in Fernand's room I found myself surrounded with the comfort of a first-class hotel; but the hotels in Paris of every class were just then so full that I should have had the annoyance of being refused by one after another if I had tried to get taken in anywhere without giving some days' notice. I could stay in Fernand's room till the Monday, when he was returning; and, Georges being occupied in a bank, where he works all day till the evening, I went out next morning and secured a room in a hotel for the following Monday. My next job was to have an interview with Cook as to the best means of continuing my journey; this ended in my buying a railway ticket for Basel, and another ticket for a berth in the sleeping-car for the following Wednesday night. Georges and I met for the evening and dined together at the same restaurant, and this time we found there Marcel, another friend of his who ought to have

been there the preceding evening, but had had an engagement elsewhere. He is so much at home in this restaurant that he helps the management when help is required. For the moment the management consists only of the proprietress, who is a widow and we think has an eye on Marcel, a barmaid, and another girl. Marcel knows enough English to speak of himself as "the bar-man," and to address me as "My dear fellow." He was in the navy during the war and had lessons in English from a priest, the head of a great monastery near London, but I could get no further particulars. Marcel's work in the restaurant was only parergon; he earns his living in the office of a firm that lets out automobiles, where he is an accountant. He and Georges usually meet for their Sunday outings, and on the Sunday morning we met him again at his restaurant, this time by appointment.

"And how long did you say you are staying?" asked Marcel.

"I arrived on Thursday, and I am going next Wednesday," I said.

"Oh, but that's very soon. Can't you stay a little longer? Such a short visit."

"I am sorry, but I am on my way to Sicily, and I have already bought my ticket; the trains are so full that I had to get it in good time."

"Let me see it," exclaimed Georges. "I want to see my uncle's ticket."

He began to call me his uncle from England about fifteen years ago, when we first met, and I have called him my nephew ever since. I suppose they all know him well enough to understand that we are not really related. But where was my ticket? What had I done with it? I couldn't find it.

"When did you have it last?"

"Which pocket did you put it in?"

"Did you leave it in your bedroom?"

I searched and searched and found my sleeping-car ticket, which was a sheet of paper, but my railway ticket, which was the ordinary small piece of cardboard, was not in any of my pockets. I remembered that while I was getting up that morning I had taken it out of my pocket-book, wherein I had put it when I bought it, and put it in some other extra safe place, after writing down in my account-book how much it had cost—a hundred and ten francs and some centimes.

"Then you must have dropped it on the floor," said Georges. "Now, Marcel, we will go back with my uncle at once and find his ticket."

I thought of Fernand's room on the sixth floor, and no lift, crammed and crowded with rubbish—a dying palm in a pot draped with a piece of cotton-velvet; several lucky pigs; broken chairs; brackets with photos in frames; under everything and over most things empty boxes that might once have contained shirts; on the left-hand side of the mantelpiece an Egyptian woman, in terra-cotta, taking two pails to a well; on the right-hand side, to match, Joan of Arc listening to the voices. It looked as though Fernand had never thrown anything away since he first occupied the room. It was bad enough to contemplate finding a railway ticket by myself in that confusion, but how much worse would it not have been if Georges and Marcel had come with me to crowd the room further!

"No, no," I said, "please don't. If it is in the room it will be safe till I return this evening; I will have a thorough search and find it then. Besides, it may still be

in one of my pockets. Let's talk of something else. Where do we go for lunch ? "

They allowed themselves to be persuaded, and an astute employment of bus and métro brought us to our preordained restaurant, which was on the quay near a bridge, and here we found Henri waiting for us.

They had allowed themselves to be persuaded, but they could not keep off my ticket, and the situation had to be made clear to Henri.

" I am so sorry about your ticket," he said, as we were getting through our déjeuner. " I hope you'll find it this evening."

" If I don't," I replied, " I must make up my mind to the loss and just buy another."

" A hundred and ten francs ! " exclaimed Georges.

" Yes," I replied. " It's awful, isn't it? But it's not so bad as it sounds—not so bad as it would have been before the war. Then to lose a hundred and ten francs would have meant losing over £4 sterling : now it's only just over £2. So that's something."

" Behold the English philosopher ! " said Georges. " He can extract comfort even from the war."

" If you are looking for comfort," said Henri, " you should remember that this will be a lesson from which you will learn to be more careful in future."

" In that case," I replied, " it seems a pity that it was not a greater loss, for, surely, the greater the loss the greater, and hence the more valuable, the lesson."

" If it had been a ticket for Turin or Rome or Palermo, perhaps ? "

" Yes. I wonder for what city the ticket ought to be the loss of which would be such a lesson that one would never lose anything again. The fact is, I am getting old.

I had a Panama hat, but when I looked for it to wear it on my travels I could not find it. Lost! And I had to come in this one."

"Oh! but every one loses things," said Georges. "I lost my fountain pen the other day. And Henri lost his way in Madagascar during the war. And Marcel has lost his heart to the widow at the restaurant."

Here Marcel boxed Georges' ears and there was a scrimmage. We all rose and adjourned to another place for our coffee. I said:

"Apropos—who is the lady who so kindly brings me a cup of coffee in the morning?"

"Oh yes," replied Georges, "that's Jeanne. She always brings Fernand a cup, because she has a spirit lamp and makes enough."

"Where does she make it? Where does she come from?"

"She is your neighbour; she lives in the next room."

"Oh! I see. Does she live all alone?"

"Not exactly."

"Married?"

"Not exactly."

"Perhaps I'd better not ask any more."

"You can ask as much as you like. He's a printer."

"Well, it's very kind of her. I must give her something when I go away. What shall it be? I cannot very well offer her money."

"No, of course you can't," said Georges. "She would not like that."

"If you were a royal personage," said Henri, "you might give her a brooch with your initials in diamonds."

"And a diamond breast-pin to the printer," added Marcel.

"That would be overdoing it," said Georges. "No, you must give her flowers."

"Very well. About five francs worth, I suppose. There's a shop close by. I'll get some the day before I go."

"No, I don't mean that," said Georges. "You needn't buy them yourself; she can do that. You just give her a five-franc note and tell her it is for her to buy flowers with; then she can buy anything she likes."

"What a capital idea!" I said; "you are sure she'll understand?"

"Yes," said Marcel, "she will understand. That's what we call 'the language of flowers'."

So it was settled. Then came the question of where to go for our outing. To the country? Ah, but what country? St. Cloud? Very well, St. Cloud. Then we must take a bus. But the crowds waiting for the bus! And we must join the queue and wait—who could tell how long? So, as we were so many, we agreed that it would cost scarcely more if we took a taxi—Marcel thought it might even cost less, and this opinion commanded our respect, for accountants have cultivated an almost indecent familiarity with the secret practices of figures. They can make them do or prove anything. They even know why they never come to the same twice running when you add them up—I mean, when I add them up. But the taxis were all full, till Georges cleverly stalked an empty one whose driver agreed to take us to the Barrière, where we hoped for a tram. At the Barrière, however, the trams were full, and it began to rain, so we sheltered in a café, smoked cigarettes, and drank vin blanc au citron till the shower was over.

"How long is it since you were last in Paris?" inquired Henri.

"It is now May, 1920, and I was last here in May, 1914."

"A great deal of water has flowed under the Pont Neuf during those six years."

"Let us talk about something else," interrupted Georges. "I saw you searching in your pockets again. Have you found your ticket?"

"Not yet," I replied. "I was not going to talk about the war. I was going to say that I don't see much difference in Paris except that it is fuller than I have ever known it to be. And the taxis, when I have succeeded in getting one, are all like the one we have just been in, very rickety. And the roads all want mending. Also the money has become confusing. And they continually give me stamps instead of change: I don't mind that, because I can use them for post-cards, but if I offer them stamps to buy a ticket in the métro, they refuse them."

"It is not just," said Henri solemnly.

I was going on with my complaints, but the rain was now over and, the trams being still full, we set out to walk from the Barrière to St. Cloud, discussing as we went the dreariness of the road. I said that we consider our London environs to be pretty dreary, but I doubted whether they are drearier than those of Paris.

"What does it matter?" said Georges. "Travellers seem to have a craze for comparing one place with another. This place is more something than that, another place is less something than this. Why not accept the fact that every place is different and enjoy yourself? I intend to sing this afternoon, unless you object."

"Behold the French philosopher!" I said. "Cer-

tainly you shall sing, Georges. And in the meantime you will be pleased to know that I am beginning to feel happier about my ticket."

"Have you found it in one of your pockets? I was sure you would."

"It isn't that; it is this. I have just remembered that the day before I left London I received a cheque for £1 16*s*. 9*d*. which I had not expected—what we call a windfall. So that, though I have lost two pounds over the ticket, I have found £1 16*s*. 9*d*. over the cheque, and that makes me only three shillings and threepence to the bad."

"The English philosopher again!" said Georges.

"But," said Marcel, "you haven't got it right."

"Listen to Marcel," said Georges, "he is an accountant."

Marcel began: "If it had been before the war, the loss of a hundred and ten francs would have been over four pounds sterling—say £4 8*s*. If you have to buy a new ticket now, at the present rate of exchange it will only cost you about £2 5*s*., so that you will save the difference between £4 8*s*. and £2 5*s*., which is £2 3*s*. Now you have a windfall of £1 16*s*. 9*d*., and that added to £2 3*s*. makes £3 19*s*. 9*d*. saved."

This was consoling, and we arrived at St. Cloud in a state of elation. We entered the park and wandered about through the woods in the aimless fashion adopted by holiday-makers, meeting other parties similarly engaged. The French are said to jeer at us because we take our pleasures sadly. Perhaps nations do not understand each other's sadness, as they do not understand each other's humour. I thought I saw more sadness on that Sunday afternoon at St. Cloud than could be

squeezed out of half a dozen Bank Holidays on Hampstead Heath. It may be that for an Englishman the French variety is more penetrating than his own, and that it was the quality not the quantity of the Parisian sadness that affected me.

Presently Henri spied an empty seat and proposed a cigarette ; every one was pleased to hear and accept this suggestion. We sat down, and Georges began to sing. He is not so much a singer as what they call a diseur. His singing voice is sufficient, but his natural instinct for the delivery of the words is his great gift. He speaks them so clearly that no one can miss a syllable, and he puts into them meanings which I should never have found there, sometimes helping himself with gestures ; and all the time his appearance is so happy that the passers-by look, listen, and linger in the hope of learning the secret of his gaiety.

Among those who wandered by and stopped to listen was a wounded soldier in a machine which he propelled with his hands and arms, his legs being uselessly stretched out in front of him. He came near our seat, and Georges gave him a parenthetical smile, and addressed to him specially the opening of his next song :

Si vous n'avez rien à me dire
Pourquoi venir auprès de moi ?

The soldier returned the smile and cleverly evoluted past us. Georges finished his song and started another. The wounded soldier, having made a detour, came back in time to receive this refrain :

Quand je vois servir une tête de veau
Ça me rappelle ma légitime,

which Georges delivered with an air of dedicating it to him specially as a cure for wounded legs. The soldier

smiled again in recognition, as though he already felt better and, steering his machine to the left to avoid a straying child, upset and lay helpless on the path about twenty yards from us. In a moment a crowd had collected, Georges was in the midst of it directing the operations, and every one was obeying him. Marcel was standing next me. I turned to him and said :

" I shouldn't know what to do, should you, Marcel ? "

" No," he replied, " but Georges was a stretcher-bearer in the war."

In what seemed to me a very short time the soldier was back in his machine none the worse—he had not far to fall—and the child, though frightened, was not hurt. We returned to our seat. I said to Georges :

" And so you learnt that during the war. Not a very safe job—stretcher-bearing ? "

" I did not mind that," he replied. " I knew I could not be safe, but I did not like to have to stick my bayonet into people, although they were Prussians ; so I applied for a change."

" Instead of killing the enemy you helped to keep your own people alive. It's a mercy you got through yourself. Were you never hit ? "

" I had several close shaves," he replied.

" And you were shell-shocked, my dear," said Marcel.

" Oh, that's over now. Let us talk about something else. Has my uncle found his ticket yet ? "

" No ; but I've thought of another way of looking at it. I'm staying with you ; that's right, isn't it ? "

" Certainly."

" Then I am not paying for my bedroom, and it will be altogether four nights. They would charge me at least fifteen francs per night at an hotel, so I am saving four

times fifteen, that is sixty francs. Of course, it is only about thirty shillings in English, but it helps to reduce the loss on the ticket."

"Sixty francs! You can get a lovely Panama hat for sixty francs in a shop I know. They are in the window, all prices."

"Wait a minute," interrupted Marcel. "We must add the thirty shillings to the £3 19*s*. 9*d*. It makes altogether £5 9*s*. 9*d*. that you will have saved over the loss of your ticket."

Here Henri said:

"If you go on like this you will soon be able to afford the most expensive Panama in Paris."

"I don't think I shall buy it," I said; "I should only lose it, and a cheap one will do for that. Isn't Georges going to finish his song?"

"What was I saying when that child got in the way? Oh well, never mind:

A Chaillot, mon bon homme,
On ne mangera plus de pommes."

So few are born with Georges' gift of gaiety and song that it seems a pity to waste him in a bank when there are many expert accountants and others—like Marcel, for instance—who can do what he is doing there just as well. Perhaps he would be most valuable in a hospital—a kind of male nurse whose business it should be to sing to the patients and keep up their spirits, as he sang to the soldiers in the trenches.

It was now time to find a restaurant and have dinner interspersed with songs, and Georges confirmed the suggestion by singing:

Le vin, l'amour, et le tabac,
Voilà le refrain du bivouac.

And after dinner we returned to Paris, where they took me to a crowded place in which dancing was going on. They were all work-people, and the gate-keeper was a friend of Georges. I sat among the crowd at a table, and my young friends danced in turn with any of the girls who happened to be disengaged.

Next morning Georges called on me before going to his office.

"Have you found your ticket?"

"No," I replied. "I had a regular search last night all over the room for half an hour and could not find it anywhere."

"Well, now I'll have another search. I came early on purpose; I need not go to the office for half an hour. You lie still and I'll look."

So he spent half an hour looking in all the places I had looked in overnight, turning over all the things I had turned over, and examining the insides of all the boxes and ornaments which I had examined. At last he said:

"When do you start?"

"I leave this room to-day," I replied, "but I do not leave Paris till Wednesday. In the meantime I shall be occupied with those other friends I told you about. So I shall not see you again."

"Oh yes, those literary people. Very well; now look here. It is St. Antoine who finds things that are lost. Don't you worry; go and buy your Panama. Here is the address of the shop. It will be all right. I'll tell you what I'll do. At lunch-time to-day I shall see a young lady whose aunt is very devout. I will tell her all about your loss, and she will tell me where there is an altar to St. Antoine. I will pray to him, and he will find your ticket."

"Thank you very much, Georges. That will be very kind of you; and please make St. Antoine understand that my train starts at 8.40 on Wednesday night, and unless the ticket appears by Wednesday morning I shall have to pocket my loss and buy another."

"All right; he will do what he can, and you need not trouble about your loss of the ticket, or the loss of the money, or about getting old or anything else. Don't forget to write from Italy.

> Je n'ai passé qu'un mois en Italie,
> Mais j'en rapporte un si doux souvenir
> Que désormais, si longue soit ma vie——

And especially don't forget to stop in Paris on your way back. Oh yes, and I'll put in a prayer to St. Antoine asking him to look after you and not to let you lose anything else all the time you are away. Au revoir."

"Au revoir," I replied, and he was gone.

Wednesday morning came, but no news from St. Antoine. So I went back to the ticket-office and was as apologetic as I could be to the young man, hoping that if I treated him politely he might perhaps give me a new ticket gratis. I inquired whether such a thing had ever happened before, and whether he had any technique for the treatment of stupid old gentlemen who lose their railway tickets.

He was as sympathetic as I had been apologetic. It did happen occasionally, he said, and even with young people. Only last week a voyager, not yet seventeen, returned to the office having lost his ticket for Bucharest. Think of that!—ever so much farther than Basel. He had had to explain, with infinite regret, that there was nothing for it but to buy another, which the young voyager did

grumbling. I did not grumble outwardly, but I followed his example about buying a new ticket.

Georges to his uncle Henry.

PARIS,

Wednesday, June 2, midnight, 1920.

MY DEAR UNCLE HENRY,

I hope you will arrive safely at Bâle where I am sending this letter. As I promised you, I visited the altar of St. Antoine in the church I spoke of, and prayed with infinite devotion for twenty minutes, which is ten minutes longer than ought to have been necessary. That was on Monday. Fernand returned late last night, Tuesday, and this evening, Wednesday, gave me your ticket, which I enclose. But he did not find it till 8 this evening, and did not give it to me till 9 o'clock, after you had started. He could not understand why Joan of Arc should be holding in her arms a railway ticket to Bâle. Did she take it from you, or did you give it to her ? Now, why could not St. Antoine have managed better ? He might have shown it to us when we looked for it before it was too late. Perhaps that was because he had not then been prayed to. Still, there was time after I had prayed to him. Is he trying to carry on his business with an insufficient staff ? That is what my bank is trying to do. It is what all the banks are trying to do in Paris—one effect of the war. And it may be the same in Heaven.

Marcel sends you his love, and so does Henri, and I am,

Your affectionate nephew,

GEORGES.

Uncle Henry to his nephew Georges.

BASEL, *June* 3, 1920.

MY DEAR GEORGES,

Thank you for your letter and for sending the ticket.

Saint Antoine

St. Antoine might have played up better; but he did his best afterwards to make amends. This is what happened. I undressed and went to bed in the sleeping car, and presently woke up because the train was standing still. It was getting light, and I wondered why we were stopping. What time was it? Where was my watch? Oh, mon Dieu! it ought to have been in the pocket of my pyjamas, but it wasn't there. Where had I put it? I was too much upset to think of trying to go to sleep again. And I could not move about and look for it, because I should have disturbed the gentleman in the berth below me. I knew he was going to get out at Mülhausen, and there I lay becalmed somewhere in France, unable to sleep, and with nothing to do till Mülhausen except to grizzle. After grizzling for about a fortnight I woke up again with a distinct recollection that I had laid my watch on my berth intending to wind it up and put it in my pocket. It had probably slipped down between the berth and the wall of the carriage; but, although the train was now moving and making a noise, I refrained from looking on the floor because of the gentleman in the other berth. Here were two things lost already, and I had only been a week on my travels. All I could do was to look about. It was light enough for me to observe that there were not so many clothes hanging up. I managed to look into the lower berth. The gentleman was not there. Had he stolen my clothes while I was asleep? No, he had only taken his own. As he was gone we must have passed Mülhausen, and must be near Basel. I got on the lower berth, reached down, and there was my watch on the floor. Bravo, St. Antoine! You have done better than I hoped. I will burn you a candle next time I come across your altar in a church.

So you see that though he was too late with the ticket, he heard the second part of your prayer, and was in time with the watch; I am glad it was not the other way about, and send you my best thanks for praying so efficiently. You have a saying "Jamais deux sans trois." If I am to complete the triad of losses by losing a third thing I hope St. Antoine will find it at once and not give me another scare.

My love to Marcel and Henri, and best thanks to Fernand for the use of his room,

Your affectionate uncle,

HENRY.

P.S. It seems to me that I should have made £5 9*s.* 9*d.* just as well if I had not lost my ticket. Then I should have saved also the price of the new one, £2 5*s.*, and that, in addition, would have brought the total amount saved up to £7 14*s.* 9*d.*, which would have gone some way towards buying a new watch if St. Antoine had been too late with that and in time with the ticket. Please ask Marcel whether this would not be the correct way to look at the matter. I want to get it right, so that I can fill up my income-tax return properly.

Basel

To Boris Ord

Chapter 24 A Lost Song

IT was in 1868, now more than fifty years ago, that I first went to Basel. My mother had taken my eldest brother, my elder sister and myself to Evian, on the Lake of Geneva, where she wanted to try the waters ; we made acquaintance with some English people there, and returned with them to England via Switzerland and the Rhine. None of the party took the slightest interest in any of the subjects that interested me, and I was thrown a good deal on my own resources.

Of all there was to see in Basel the sight that most impressed me was the river. I remember how it came swirling round its great curve, and rushing through the arches of the bridge, only a few feet below me, near enough to give me a pleasing sensation of danger ; and then on, past the windows of the Hôtel des Trois Rois, and down to Cologne. I had seen, in pictures of the Adoration of the Magi, the Three Kings, magnificently attired and cleverly differentiated—an old man, a middle-aged man, and an attractive young black man—producing their offerings of gold and frankincense and myrrh ; and neither the Child nor the Mother appeared to take more interest in the gifts than the other members of our party took in my subjects. The pictures always had a background full of retainers and strange beasts which established an oriental atmosphere, and I used to regret that there

were no zoological gardens in the days of the painters so that they might have studied their camels from the life and put in better portraits.

In addition to the pictures of the Adoration, to the Hôtel des Trois Rois, and to the city of Cologne which we afterwards visited, I had other sources of information about the Magi—the gospels, for instance, and Twelfth Night parties. Besides these they were mentioned in poems, especially in one which I used to think came into the house as a song. My mother paid (say) two guineas a year, and we were entitled to (say) a dozen pieces of music at a time ; we tried them over and could keep a specified number—if we wanted more we had to pay extra.

I was born too late to have had much to do with " She wore a Wreath of Roses " and " We met, 'twas in a Crowd." I gathered a little something about them from the croonings of my nurse, who, however, to do her justice, was more addicted to " Annie Laurie " and " Adeste Fideles." But I came in for the full flood of the kind of ballad that used to be advertised as sung with great applause by Madame Lemmens-Sherrington. We retained and paid for " I cannot sing the Old Songs " and " Strangers yet ! " both by Claribel. There was a dreadful song called " Cleansing Fires," words by Lord Houghton, music by Virginia Gabriel. And there were quantities by Miss M. Lindsay (Mrs. J. Worthington Bliss), including " Home they brought her Warrior Dead " and " Late, late, so late." When turning out old drawers my memory has been occasionally refreshed by coming upon these and the remnants of such other ballads as we bought under the privilege of our subscription. Not long ago I dispatched to an undergraduate friend at Cambridge a parcel of them, and he included a

selection in a concert designed to show to a modern audience the radical difference that underlies the songs of Debussy and Richard Strauss, on which they had been brought up, and those earlier works which used to delight their grandfathers and grandmothers.

Notwithstanding this refreshing of my memory, I did not remember one song better than another merely because we bought it. There was, for instance, one about a timid passenger which we did not buy, and yet I have ever retained a clear recollection of the words of the whole of the first verse and of all the melody. The passenger, because it was such a fearful night, wanted to pace the deck with the pilot; the pilot, however, declined his company and said: "Fear not, but trust in Providence, wherever thou may'st be." These words were the refrain, and concluded each verse; but the usual supplementary recommendation about keeping one's powder dry was omitted. And yet the pilot must, one would think, have heard the proverb which tells us that God helps those who help themselves. It is unfortunate that my memory should fail me as to the rest of the words. I should fancy, however, that the ship and the passengers and the crew must have become involved in some tragic end, possibly rendered more tragic by the fact that the timid passenger had disobeyed the notice and had spoken to the man at the wheel. I am no seaman, but my dictionary says that a pilot is a steersman, so I suppose he must have been at the wheel when not pacing the deck. After the song had been returned to the music shop I suffered great distress, because we had tried it over so often that I could not forget those parts of it which I have specified: they ran in my head, and I feared that I was imperilling the salvation of my immortal soul by

harbouring words and music to which I was not entitled. And this is called being a prig.

Whether or not we bought that other song about the Three Kings it is in none of my old drawers or boxes, and I have never seen it since; it is unlike the one about the pilot in that I retain neither a word nor a note of it but only the slenderest recollection of its purport, and something about the ancient river irresistibly bearing its sacred burden along on its ample bosom, and the water bubbling up under the keel of the boat as she put in at Cologne—the bearing along and the bubbling up being, of course, entrusted to the accompaniment. I tried to reconstitute their voyage from Bethlehem to the Rhine, and wondered at what point they embarked on the river. Was it also forbidden to speak to the man at their wheel? They surely must have had an expert pilot to negotiate the Falls of the Rhine. In this particular difficulty I was helped by a Swiss friend, a Zurichois, who informed me that there were two opinions on the subject of the Falls of the Rhine. It seems that Julius Cæsar makes no mention of them, yet he ought to have said something about them if they were there in his time; and this omission led an ingenious savant to invent a theory that the Rhine formerly turned to the left before reaching what is now the Lake of Constance. I knew that Cæsar landed in Britain 55 B.C.—that, and the Second Call of Abraham, 1921, and the Creation of the World, 4004, are the three pre-Christian dates which I have never forgotten—and whatever the Rhine was doing in Cæsar's time it must have been doing much the same in the time of the Magi. So I supposed that, having somehow got to Italy, they travelled up through the peninsula and, by the diligence road, or whatever then represented it,

over one of the great Alpine passes with all their followers and camels, their suit-cases and Saratoga trunks. After crossing the S. Gottardo and the Oberalp they would go along by the Rhine until it became navigable (say) at Sargans. Or if they went by the Splügen they would still have reached Sargans; and there they perhaps chartered their boat—or rather their boats; if the pictures were right about their followers and their luggage they would have had to charter a good many boats, and even a few Noah's Arks. Then they would be rowed along the lakes of Wallenstadt and Zürich, and would follow the course of what is now the Limmat past Baden to Brugg, where the Aare would fall in and increase the water of their river. At Waldshut they would enter the present channel of the Rhine and proceed to Basel.

Of course, I did not make up all this journey for them at once; it took me some time, and was partly the result of my own subsequent travels on the Continent. In 1868, when we left Evian, being already north of the great Alpine passes we did not have to cross any of them; but we did go to the Rheinfall; and, by whatever route the Magi got to Basel, we got there by train.

I had no doubt that the Three Kings when they reached Basel put up for the night at the Hôtel des Trois Rois; and that, in the morning, instead of paying their bill, they gave their name to the house. I argued that, being kings, they were of course rich, and I had already come to understand that rich people never pay more than they need—not to pay more than you need is one of the secrets of how to become rich, or at least of how to become richer. I do not see that the proprietor of the hotel can have had anything to complain of, because in the long run his new sign must have brought his house far more in the

shape of custom than the bill incurred by his royal guests could have amounted to, even supposing them to have brought as many retainers as are shown in all the pictures of the Adoration of the Magi put together. And I picked up the notion that the town as well as the hotel was named after them. Is not the word Basel derived from some Greek word meaning a king ? And does not the town use basilisks as supporters of its arms ? In this last circumstance I saw some kind of heraldic pun.

From Basel I imagined that the Three Kings continued their voyage in their boats and Noah's Arks down the river to Cologne, though why they wanted to get to Cologne I never considered. We wanted to get there because we were on our way to England, and there was sight-seeing to be done. We performed the first part of the journey by train, and I just remember Strassburg, Heidelberg, Frankfurt, and Homburg where we saw the gambling. At Mayence, following the example of the three royal martyrs, we took boat to Cologne, but our boat was a Rhine steamer. We saw all there was to be seen in the city and the bones of the Three Kings in their dimly-lighted cathedral shrine, each skull, encircled by its glimmering golden crown, established themselves in my memory, and collaborated with all that I had learnt about them to confirm my theory of their voyage. But, somehow, I always had a recollection of having seen at Cologne many more bones than would be necessary to form the bodies of three kings ; no doubt the bones of their retainers, I thought, and perhaps some of those queer camels and other beasts of burden ; but I was not easy in my mind about it. I continued the story, however, by assuming that the pagan Germans had cruelly martyred the Magi and, on coming to their senses, had repented,

embraced Christianity, and built the cathedral over their remains. True, the guide-book says that the foundations of the present cathedral were not laid till 1248; but it does not say how long one ought to allow for the Germans to come to their senses, repent, embrace Christianity, and make up their minds to lay the foundations of a cathedral. Besides, it admits that there had been an earlier church on the site; and who knows whether this earlier church did not displace a still earlier one whose existence was unknown to the guide-book?

I had never been on the Continent before 1868, but I have been there repeatedly since, and have found other interests in the city of Basel. Arriving in June, 1920, early in the morning, I had the rest of the day and the night before going on by the S. Gottardo to Milan. For my sightseeing I selected the Holbeins. Unfortunately, they are housed in the Museum, and if I were to write down my favourite amusement it would not now be "visiting museums." All my life long I have suspected museums of giving me more boredom than pleasure. I can no longer conceal from myself and others that this is so. It was the Musée de Cluny that revealed the fact fully to me one day when I was roaming through it, whistling softly to myself the lovely minuet from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. I had recently been to a performance of that comedy with Lully's music at the Odéon, and the neighbourhood of the theatre had caused the minuet to float into my head. So as I was whistling aimlessly about among the showcases a guardian stopped me and said sullenly:

"Faut pas siffler."

I left the building at once. I knew I could not trust myself. What is the use of a museum if one may not

whistle in it ? It is worth while if there are Holbeins there, but I saw none at the Musée de Cluny.

At Basel there are not only Holbeins, there are also Böcklins ; and one has to pass through the Böcklins, of which there are too many, to get to the Holbeins, of which there are too few. The contrast reminded me of my policeman, Mr. Beaman. He used to buy any second-hand object that took his fancy, and thus gradually acquired a collection which I never saw, but, from what he told me about it, I drew my own conclusions as to its contents. I was showing him a snuff-box once, a beautiful antique silver one, and said :

" I rather like little boxes."

" Yes," he replied sympathetically, " I know. So do I. If there's one thing more than another it's little boxes and screw-topped jars."

I am sure that his collection resembled the museum at Basel in containing things in wrong proportions. And herein most collections resemble life : to the wise man the art of passing through both consists largely in avoiding the too many screw-topped jars and Böcklins, and in concentrating on the too few Holbeins and silver snuff-boxes. So in the museum at Basel I devoted all my attention to the Holbeins and then departed. But numbers do tell, and the numbers of dull, uninteresting things which I saw on my way in and out of that museum left such an unpleasant taste in my mouth that I crossed the road and, taking a seat on the terrace of the cathedral, looked down on the Rhine with a sense of relief and gratitude.

It must have been by design that Nature placed that terrace at Basel so conveniently near the museum. It is another instance of the motherly love which prompted her to plant the dock wherever the nettle has been allowed

to grow, and to establish Fortnum & Mason's in Piccadilly just where it is. For in Albemarle Street, close by, lived the dentist who was employed by my mother to attend to my teeth when I was a boy. After a visit to him, we used to adjourn to Fortnum & Mason's, where I was given a preserved apricot to take the taste of his fingers out of my mouth. If anyone were to go exhaustively into the question, it would no doubt appear that kind Nature has placed some compensating contrast in the neighbourhood of all dentists and of all museums. Take a few museums for example. See how she has placed pigeons in the front court of the British Museum ! She has done so in order to refresh and cheer the jaded visitor as he passes out into Great Russell Street. At the National Gallery she made the fountains play in Trafalgar Square for the same purpose. She directed the Seine past the windows of the Louvre, launched boats on it, and taught men to fish from its embankments and bridges. The Museum at Palermo is better still, and within its walls contains its own refreshment. You must, of course, see the metopes from the ruined temples at Selinunte, which are on the ground floor, and the triptych by Mabuse, if it is still attributed to him, which is upstairs. These treasures are to Palermo what the Holbeins are to Basel. After enjoying them you are free to take a seat in the shady cloister, and to think over them in peace, forgetting all you have passed that is dusty and dead. Then you linger on and dream among flowering shrubs, and listen to the splashing of a fountain, while the sunlight plays upon the papyrus which grows in the water, and gold-fish swim round in the basin. If you keep very still you may perhaps catch sight of a nervous rat, out for a prowl, who goes running along by the raised pavement,

stopping short every now and then, and furtively looking for something which he has mislaid.

The crowning example of contrast in this kind is, of course, the view of the Bay of Naples from the balcony of the extremely uninteresting museum on the Vomero. So far as I can remember no museum is endowed with such a compensating jewel of a contrast, and no museum needs it so much. It is one of the most renowned views in Europe, and it deserves all the praise that has been given to it. It is only less magnificent than that from Mount Eryx, which I hope soon to look upon, for it is the goal of my present journey. That view from Mount Eryx, without any dreary museum to enhance its wonder, is the finest I have ever seen—a foolish figure, unless the reader has present to his mind all the other views that I have seen, and believes that I have compared them. I have seen enough views to know that it would be useless to compare them. Think of Richmond Hill, of Taormina, of Hampstead Heath, of the Sacro Monte above Varese, of Stirling Castle, of the terrace at St. Germain, and of hundreds of others. What is the use of comparing such views ? One can only agree with Georges—accept the fact that they differ, and enjoy oneself.

I suspect that my young undergraduate musician at Cambridge knows all there is to be known about the uses of variety and contrast. Perhaps he will interpolate in one of his future concerts among the songs I have sent him by Claribel, Virginia Gabriel and Miss M. Lindsay (Mrs. J. Worthington Bliss) a couple of silver snuff-boxes in the shape of " Archibald Douglas " by Löwe in the first part, and " Auf dem Wasser zu singen " by Schubert in the second. These will supply the variety necessary to bring his entertainment into line with a first-rate museum.

And, for the final view over the Bay of Naples perhaps he will take me back with him to supper in his rooms, and we shall spend the rest of the evening, just we two, railing at our mistress the world and settling the programme for his next concert.

In the meantime I was looking down on the Rhine from the terrace of the cathedral at Basel. There it was, still swirling majestically round its curve, rushing through the arches of the bridge, and past the windows of the Hôtel des Trois Rois. This remains for me the most absorbing sight in the city. And I thought again of my Three Kings in that lost song navigating the stream and putting up for the night at their hotel. But a good deal of the glamour had vanished ; for in the interval between 1868 and 1920 I had made the mistake of consulting the hagiological authorities, and had ascertained that my theory did not agree with the received views. All goes well at the opening of the story. The old man in the pictures is Gaspare, King of Tarsus, and he offers gold because he comes from a land of merchants. Melchiorre is the middle-aged man, King of Arabia and Nubia, and he offers frankincense because it is the product of his country. The pleasing young black fellow is Baldassare, King of Saba, who offers myrrh because he comes from the land of spices. Then I ran up against a disappointment. They did not travel straight from Bethlehem to the Rhine. When they had finished adoring at Bethlehem they went home again ; and this I might have known, because St. Matthew (II. 12) says distinctly :

> And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Some years later they were found in their own country by St. Thomas when he went proselytizing in India.

This makes Tarsus, Arabia, Nubia and Saba all one country, east of Bethlehem. I cannot help it, but it seems to require a note. It must have been a joyous meeting, wherever it took place, and what a surprise for all! St. Thomas baptized them, which started them off carrying the gospel to the Far East. It was there that they suffered martyrdom, so the Germans had nothing to do with that. Their remains would have stayed where they were, no doubt developing thaumaturgical properties until now, had they not been discovered and brought to Constantinople by the Empress Helena. But they only stayed in Constantinople until the time of the First Crusade, when they were transferred to Milan. It is a far more roundabout story, and with more stoppages in it, than the one I had invented for them; and more macabre, for it is a journey of three corpses instead of a journey of three living potentates. Either the S. Gottardo and the Oberalp, or the Splügen, would have been on their road to Basel, but I have not yet found any tradition about their hotel there—or rather, as I now suppose, of the hotel patronized by those who were transporting their remains. It may have been named after the Three Kings through the influence of Barbarossa, for it was he who gave the bones to some archbishop who gave them to Cologne; and in the arms of that city their three crowns are emblazoned. There still remained the question as to all those other puzzling bones which I had seen at Cologne. They cannot have belonged to their numerous retainers, for neither the Empress Helena nor Barbarossa would have troubled to preserve them and bring them from the East.

It was clear by this time that I had to give up my theory about the wanderings and martyrdom of the Magi in

favour of the accepted view, which nevertheless may have as little foundation in fact; but I consoled myself with the reflection that it is not unusual for theories to have to be abandoned. As an illustration of this my Swiss friend gave me further consolation, for when I told him all I had learnt he informed me that the bottom had recently been knocked out of the other theory about the change in the course of the Rhine; it was the glaciers before they melted that are now thought to have gone along the course both of the Rhine and of the Limmat. Also he says that the name of Basel is from a Celtic word Wasal or Basal, which means water, and was taken by the Romans from a village on the site and turned into Basilea. I must look the question up as soon as I return to London and can put the British Museum to its proper use.

And my Swiss friend did more. He reminded me that the martyrdom at Cologne of which I had probably been thinking was that of St. Ursula and her Eleven Thousand Holy Virgins. I ought not to have required any reminding of this, because I had by that time been to Venice and seen Carpaccio's series of delightful pictures showing how St. Ursula made a pilgrimage to Rome, lost her way on the return journey, arrived by mistake at Cologne and was there martyred. I had particularly noticed these pictures for various reasons, so that I certainly ought not to have confused the two martyrdoms. Is it possible, I asked myself, that I had done worse and had mixed in with the two legends the song about the pilot? Perhaps there was only one song and it was all about St. Ursula. The timid passenger, who proposed to pace the deck with the pilot, may have been originally the English prince, the betrothed of the saint who accompanied her and her virgins on the pilgrimage. Had I

identified him with one of the Three Kings in the legend ? Kings and princes, when used for purposes of poetry, are easily interchanged by the young. If that happy-go-lucky pilot was conducting St. Ursula one can understand why her voyage had such a melancholy termination. In any case, all that about the ancient river irresistibly bearing its sacred burden along upon its ample bosom and the water bubbling up under the keels of the boats would do as well for the Kings arriving at Cologne as for St. Ursula and her party. And it appears to me further that, although the bones of the Three Kings and those of St. Ursula and her Eleven Thousand Holy Virgins are kept at Cologne in separate repositories, I must, nevertheless, have managed to confuse them also ; and that is how I came to wondering why the Magi had so many more bones than could have been collected from three skeletons.

It may be that in this last act of confusion I had committed some kind of sacrilege. If so I sinned in respectable company ; for my Swiss friend assured me that Professor Owen, when visiting the Church of St. Ursula at Cologne, was shown her bones and those of her companions and at a glance detected among them many remains of lower animals. Perhaps there are camels among them after all.

Genoa

To Henry Waldo Acomb

Chapter 25

A Ricordo of the War

I WENT from Basel by the S. Gottardo to Milan and on to Genoa, where I tasted the flavour of Sicily for the first time since the war, for it was here that I found my compare Turiddu Balistrieri. I made his acquaintance at Messina in the autumn of 1908, before the earthquake, when he was a child staying with his sister, a member of the Sicilian Dramatic Company of Giovanni Grasso. It is difficult to remember the ages of growing boys, so my first question was :

" And how old are you now, Turiddu ? "

" Twenty-three."

" We have known each other for twelve years," I said, " and have been compari for eleven. But something has made more difference to you than the flight of time. You are more than twelve years older than you were when first we met behind the scenes at Messina."

" Ah yes. I have fought in the war—the war which has aged all of us and kept us two apart."

" And you have not only been through the fighting and been wounded, you were also a prisoner, and that must have aged you too."

" But not so much as it would have aged me if you had not sent me those parcels of food from England."

"I hope you received them all, Turiddu, and the boots."

"All except the last parcel, and I did not receive that because it came after the Armistice—after I had gone. Let us not talk about the war. Do you remember Holy Week in Catania?"

"Of course I do; did I not put it into my book? But I did not put in about all the town coming to the Teatro Bellini to see *La Zolfara* with Giovanni Grasso in it. How full the theatre was, and how wonderfully he acted! But then you Sicilians are all natural actors. Your mother, for instance, how good she is! And do you remember how you used to come to the hotel in Catania to see me and I used to say: 'But Turiddu, oughtn't you to be at school?' and you always replied: 'To-day is a holiday'?"

"Yes, and how my uncle objected and said that my mother ought not to let me waste so much time with that Englishman."

"I remember. We were all sitting on the pavement outside the door of Giovanni's own theatre; and when your uncle said that, Giovanni's mother, Madama Ciccia, told him not to talk nonsense and said that Turiddu would get nothing but good from his English compare."

"Yes; and you got up and kissed the old lady to thank her for speaking up for you."

"Of course I did. I am not a Sicilian, but I know how to behave like one sometimes. And do you remember, Turiddu, how you searched my pockets for chocolate the first time we met in Messina?"

"And how we went and bought the *Arabian Nights*? I have read that book all through many times. We have been together in Messina, in Naples, in Catania, in Rome.

Now we meet in Genoa; it is a new town for us."

"Being in Genoa reminds me of the last time I was here."

"When was that?" inquired Turiddu, always polite.

So I told him about it. But what I told him was rather about my being at Portofino, which is close by. It was in May, 1914. I could not go to Sicily then because I had to be back in London in June to prepare for the seventh Erewhon dinner in memory of Butler. But I wanted to go to Italy, so I went through Genoa to Portofino and stayed there for a fortnight. There were many guests in the hotel, some English, some German, and among the Germans two sisters, one of whom was strikingly beautiful. They spoke English, French, and Italian, besides German, and we three went about together.

A report spread abroad that the German Emperor was arriving in his yacht the *Hohenzollern* to pay a visit to some one in Portofino. The ladies told me that Lord Carnarvon had a villa or a castle or some kind of lordly dwelling there wherein Wilhelm's father, the lamented Kaiser Friedrich, passed some of the last weeks of his life before he returned to Berlin to die; and it seemed that the simple fisher-folk of this operatically romantic port believed it to be the wish of Kaiser Wilhelm to pay a visit to this villa in order to drop a filial tear in the room once occupied by his adored papa. But this notion, the German ladies said, was incorrect. No doubt Kaiser Wilhelm adored his father's memory—all properly brought-up sons adore their father's memory—but they had exclusive information; one of their cousins or uncles had a friend, very high in the army, and he was now travelling with the Kaiser and knew why the *Hohenzollern*

was putting in at Portofino. It had nothing to do with the late Kaiser Friedrich. They had been told the reason for the visit and all about it and it was exceedingly confidential. They might say this much, however, without betraying any confidence—their Kaiser was coming to visit a friend, a German Baron in another villa, nothing to do with Lord Carnarvon's villa; he would stay two hours and would take a cup of tea. This made me feel as though here were political developments going on and I was in the know for once—or nearly in the know.

The great day came and the hour, and we went to the house of the woman who did the washing for our hotel. She invited us to ascend to her roof, which was flat, and from which we had a view of the port and out to sea where we saw the *Hohenzollern* lying at anchor. Next we saw an electric launch go fussing away from the port, and I lent the ladies my field-glasses, and they saw the launch arrive at the yacht, and saw people get on board, but could not distinguish much. Then the electric launch came fussing back again and entered the harbour. And the Kaiser stepped off the launch and on to the landing-place. Others stepped too, but we observed only the Kaiser. I did, however, observe something further which I am sure I was intended not to miss. The eyes of the German ladies filled with patriotic tears as they gazed on the hope of their country—on him whose noble boast it was that he had preserved the peace of Europe for so many years, and whose only desire it was to go on preserving it as long as it should please the Almighty to bless his efforts.

I got back my glasses in time to have a look at this eminent personage as he walked along the jetty. Probably there was music, but my attention was taken up by

the emotions appropriate to the great moment; the tears of the German ladies had infected me, and I have forgotten all about the music. I remember the decorations, but then I had watched the preparations beforehand and had thought them inadequate. Along the shore had been planted masts whereon the inhabitants had stretched their humble fishing-nets as though to dry them in the sun.

I did not see the Kaiser go away. Possibly he stayed more than his two hours, and possibly he took more than a cup of tea. I heard that his baronial friend had amassed part of his wealth in some way connected with champagne. And they told me that the *Hohenzollern* went that evening to Genoa whence the Kaiser took train for Berlin.

The next morning there were post-cards on sale in the town with illustrations of the great event. They cost thirty centimes each, which seemed to me a good deal until I found one which showed not only the Kaiser below walking along the jetty, but also me on the roof of the laundress's house looking through my glasses, which seemed cheap for thirty centimes.

"And that," I said in conclusion, "is how I got a ricordo of the war."

It is possible that Turiddu was bored by my long recital. Anyhow he took an early opportunity of reading to me an account, which he had written and hoped to have printed in some newspaper, of his doings during the war. If he intended to pay me out in my own coin by boring me, he failed. I listened with interest to all his experiences. Perhaps I was most particularly interested when he came to the part about his being a prisoner and about the treatment he received from the compatriots of the charming ladies whose acquaintance I made at Portofino.

Naples

To the Hon. Mrs. Richard Cecil Grosvenor

Chapter 26 Pietro

ON leaving Genoa I travelled through Rome to Naples where I hoped to find my godson Pietro Lombardo. He became my godson in 1907 on the occasion of his cresima, when he was seven years old, at Trapani, where his father, Michele Lombardo, is a goldsmith. And simultaneously Michele became my compare. I was never very sure what a cresima is, but it was done by the bishop who anointed Pietro with oil in the private chapel of his palace, and while he did it I had my hand on Pietro's shoulder.

I had seen Pietro every year at Trapani from 1907 until 1913; after that the war prevented my going to Sicily; during the war we corresponded, and I knew that he was a lieutenant. I knew also that he was in Naples in 1920, but did not tell him what train I was coming by because it seemed as though that would be like commanding him to meet me: I merely told him which day to expect me. But I had put my penny in the slot, and Pietro did the rest. As the porter was carrying my luggage along the platform, a lieutenant detached himself from the crowd, came up to me, threw his arms round me and kissed me on both cheeks.

Old friends who meet after an absence display their emotions in manners as different as their characters. I remember two brothers, Englishmen, who, not having

met for years, found themselves sitting opposite one another in a railway carriage on the Underground.

"Hullo, Bob," said Bill. "Is that you? How's your liver?"

"Damn my liver," replied Bob.

"By the by, Bill," said Bob presently, "how are your kidneys?"

"Damn my kidneys," replied Bill.

That is what happens, or may happen, with the ordinary Englishman.

There is a story of how Herbert Spencer went with an old friend for a holiday in the Isle of Wight. They had not met for some time, and arrived the first night at a hotel where they had high tea with chops.

"These," said Herbert Spencer, "are remarkably large chops for so small an island."

Which shows that the philosopher may be betrayed into making a joke. But I am not quite sure about the anecdote; I have lost the reference; I will look it up when I get back and am looking up Julius Cæsar and the Falls of the Rhine.

The Sicilian, in a transport of effusiveness, embraces his friend and kisses him on both cheeks.

I knew it could only be Pietro who saluted me on the platform, but I did not recognize him. He had no doubt about my identity, but then between sixty and seventy one changes less than between ten and twenty. Besides Pietro is a Sicilian, and any Sicilian is quicker than I am, and I think that the Sicilians in general are quicker than the English in recognizing those whom they have not seen for years. Once I was recognized by one who had never seen me at all, except on a picture post-card; he had no idea that I was in the island, met me on a badly

lighted staircase, and knew me for certain at once.

Pietro took me entirely into his keeping ; he knew how to get a carriage and how much to pay the porter ; he saw me through and escorted me to the hotel. He did not approve of my hotel—said it was " un albergo di poca forza " ; but I had been there before and had written for a room, so he had to submit. It was a long time before I could find any trace of the child I had known in the capable young man who was looking after me so efficiently.

As we drove to the hotel, I said :

" How long have we known each other, Pietro ? "

He replied : " Thirteen years. I was seven when you became my padrino."

I said : " Do you remember how your father brought you to the station at Trapani one year and you kept away from the train and would not come near me ? "

" Yes " he replied, laughing, " I was afraid you would take me with you to London."

" I suppose you thought that your father, by making me your padrino, had given you to me ? "

" Something of the sort. But I should not mind coming to London with you now."

" It is much the same with me," I said. " I did not want to take you to London then ; I wasn't thinking of it ; I should have been afraid of the responsibility. But if you would come now, I should be ever so much pleased to have you, and the responsibility would be yours. You would look after me. I shall want somebody soon."

" When I am demobilized, we will think about it seriously," replied Pietro.

Then he gave me a piece of coral which he had saved up for me. It is to keep off the evil eye. A slight accident

had happened to the point, so that, being no longer sharp, it could not be trusted to work as a charm; but he promised me that when we were at Trapani his father should sharpen it up for me, it is his business to do such jobs.

"And when sharpened," said Pietro, "it will operate as well as though it had never been broken."

"Which I dare say is literally the fact," I said. But I only said it to myself. Out loud to Pietro I said: "Would it have preserved me from losing my railway ticket in Paris the other day?" and I told him about that adventure.

"Of course it would," he replied. "Nothing of that kind, no loss, no misfortune, can happen to you so long as you wear my coral when it is in working order."

"It is very kind of you, Pietro, and I accept your present with gratitude."

So I put it into my pocket in the hope that I might begin to enjoy the benefit of being its possessor, although it was in a crippled state.

The next thing was to settle where to dine, and I soon observed that, as a conjurer forces a card upon you, so Pietro was forcing Posillipo upon me. He did it skilfully, and I yielded gracefully; but I dare say he saw through my gracefulness as easily as I saw through his skill. And next, how to get there? The Neapolitan trams do not confuse Pietro; he put us into the right one, and it was crowded; we had to stand on the platform outside with about twice as many people as could have stood there in comfort. Pietro was as much at home with the restaurants at Posillipo as with the trams and managed better, for he chose one that was not crowded. It had written up over it the words "Asso Pigliatutto," and I thought to myself: "Well, that is an ominous name for a restaur-

ateur." For I supposed that Asso was the Christian name of the proprietor, or some shortened form of it, and that Pigliatutto (which means "He takes all") was his surname. But Pietro said that they have a game with cards called Asso Pigliatutto—asso is the ace and sweeps the board. It was as though the proprietor had called his restaurant by some such name as The Beggar-my-Neighbour—an ominous name for a restaurant. But it was a pleasant place, and we sat at a table overlooking the sea just as the evening boat was steaming out of the port of Naples and starting for Palermo. And to make things still pleasanter four men came, one with a voice, one with a violin, one with a mandoline, and the last with a guitar, and they set themselves to perform Neapolitan canzonets.

During dinner Pietro told me about his war experiences. He joined the army on his onomastico, that is the festa of S. Pietro, June 29, 1917, and went to Messina; thence he went to Sbarre in Calabria, and so on to other places. In October he went to Turin to go through a course previous to receiving a commission, and there he was continually being punished because he is something of a buffo and was always playing the fool. I did not see that Pietro was so much of a buffo. He was cheerful and gay all the time, but the only buffoneria he was guilty of was that he struck matches on the inside of his two front teeth in the upper row. This he did as a matter of course every time he lighted a cigarette. They exploded with a loud crack. He joined the Artiglieria Montana and from Turin went to the front, and it was at Monte Grappa that he won his Croce di Guerra.

And all the time the daylight was fading and we were going on with our dinner, while on one side of us the four men were performing their Neapolitan canzonets, and on

the other was the smooth sea whereon stealthy boats were prowling backwards and forwards, each with a bright acetylene lamp in front, silently combing the water and taking such fish as were foolish enough to be attracted by the light.

Chapter 27 Pompei

NEXT morning, as I was getting into my trousers, I observed a jagged gash in the cloth just below a back pocket in which I carry a pocket-book. This gash must have been made by some one in the crowd when we were on the tram ; but, whoever he was, he did not get my pocket-book, perhaps because he had not space in which to complete his operations ; had it been one of those pockets sewn on outside, the pocket-book would have slipped out and he would have got it ; but it was of the other sort, with the real pocket in the lining inside the cloth, and he failed. It was the first time that anything of the kind had ever happened to me in Italy. I showed the cut to Pietro as soon as he came, and he at once congratulated me on not having lost the pocket-book.

" That," he said, " was because you had my coral in your pocket."

I remembered St. Antoine and put it down to Georges' prayer. " Surely," I said, to myself " this is the third thing and the good saint has intervened." But to Pietro I said :

" Then I owe my good fortune to you. Thank you, Pietro. You feel sure that it really has begun to work, although the coral is still unmended ? "

" Well, can't you see for yourself ? "

" I admit that it looks like it," I replied. " And now about this gash—what are we to do ? "

Pietro knew and took me to the brother of his professor, who is a retired tailor. As we went along I could not help remembering that only a few days before, when I was in Rome, I had been taken by an English friend to salute an eminent Cambridge don who has retired to end his days there, and I could not help remembering him in Naples and wondering whether he has a brother a—no, I did not get so far as to wonder that; but I thought how differently the classes are divided in the two countries. In Italy, however, they call any one a professor, or almost any one, who is engaged in tuition. This gentleman mended the gash in a rapid and clever manner and, as I was Pietro's godfather, of course refused to take any payment.

We were on our way to Pompei when we visited the tailor, and dropped a train at Torre del Greco where we called on the professor's family for a snack, or a spuntino, as Pietro called it, because it blunts the appetite (spunta l'appetito). It consisted of a salad of tomatoes and onions with bread and cheese and wine, and served its purpose. Thence we proceeded to Pompei.

The first time I went to Pompei, in 1896, I was entranced, and wanted to stay there for weeks and find out all there was to know about the life of the people who lived there; and I should have liked to build in St. John's Wood a Pompeian house and to live in it. The next time I went, five years later, it bored me; it seemed as though it would not bear repeating; but then it was a wet day, and Pompei is not at its best on a wet day. Now, at my third visit, I was inclined to forgive it everything; not to the extent of wanting a Pompeian house to live in, but it was quite interesting again. I should add that the day was perfect, and it must not be forgotten that I had

Pietro with me. All the same, I do not believe it was good for me to be so much with Pietro, because he gave himself up to me entirely and seemed to live for nothing but my comfort. I am sure that if I were to be continually with him I should grow even more selfish than I naturally am.

We returned to the house of the family of the professor for dinner, and were joined by the professor himself and by his brother the tailor. The professor was formerly at Trapani, where he supervised Pietro's education; he is now professing at Caserta, and Pietro is boarding and lodging with the family during a month's leave. They have a large garden full of tomatoes, with oranges and other trees, but just now apricots were specially prominent. They were being gathered and packed in baskets to be sent to feed the coral-fishers. For the coral-fishers sleep in the sea, as Pietro expresses it, meaning that they live in their boats; and a ship loaded with provisions goes and finds them and leaves with them canned meat, bread, wine, and all necessary food, including these apricots, of which some are not yet ripe but will ripen on the voyage.

After dinner we went down the garden and helped to gather and to eat apricots, and the contadino's children were there playing with a cockchafer. They tied a string round it and it flew about, and they pulled it back and it flew away again, and so on. I do not think the cockchafer was enjoying himself, but I did not suppose that God had sent me into that particular garden on that particular evening specially to save that particular cockchafer, so I did not interfere. We smoked a few cigarettes, and before we were tired of the apricots it was time for Pietro to take me to the station and to see me off back to Naples.

Chapter 28 Capri

NEXT day was Sunday and Pietro came to take me to Capri—a regular Sunday excursion. We went down to the harbour, where we got our tickets and boarded the steamer. No morning was ever stiller or sunnier, and in the sunny stillness small boats rowed about round us containing naked, or nearly naked, boys who shouted to us :

" Chuck us a copper, governor, chuck us a copper."

We chucked, and the boys dived and came up stowing the pennies away in their mouths, and the glittering drops of water covered their nakedness as with a network of diamonds. I said :

" Don't they lose a lot of pennies, Pietro ? They cannot get them all."

He replied : " They get most of them."

Pietro has studied physics, and explained that however the penny falls it will sooner or later take a flat position and will then sink so slowly that the boy has time to swim to it under the water and catch it. And it seemed to me, as I watched them, that they did not miss more than five, or perhaps ten, per cent.

There went by between us and one of the small boats a fruit of the sea, moving slowly along just under the face of the water—a glaucous bubble of translucent jelly. It must have been a couple of feet long and a foot across

at the head—if it was the head. Pietro said it was a medusa. It was shaped something like a great mushroom, but instead of a stem it had a bunch of tassels hanging down. It travelled in a sloping position, and its umbrella-shaped head was trimmed all round with a purple edging. We called to one of the boys and pointed to it. He took it up tenderly, he did not treat it as the contadino's boys treated the cockchafer—he lifted it out and laid it gently in his boat, and we saw that the jelly it was made of was quite firm, as though the cook had mixed in with the usual ingredients more than the usual amount of isinglass. Before the sun had had time to do it any harm he carefully replaced it in the water, and it moved sluggishly away. It must have wondered. Perhaps it enjoyed its dive into the air as much as the lithe brown boys enjoyed their dives into the sea. But it did not get any pennies.

Time was up and our steamer started for Capri, crowded with holiday-makers ; we disembarked a few at Sorrento and embarked a few in exchange and presently neared the island. Before landing we visited the famous Blue Grotto. Small boats came and took us off the steamer and rowed us in through the opening. We had to make ourselves small to get through, for there was scarcely room for more than the boat to pass. I had heard of this curiosity all my life but had never actually seen it, except in a ridiculous imitation at one of the Earl's Court Exhibitions. When our boat had got inside, the boatman rowed us up to a dark corner of the grotto, where a boy had been planted on a ledge ; we could not see him, but the boatman told us he was there and that, if we gave him a franc, the boy would dive in and it would be beautiful. It was an exercise of faith to which we

were equal, especially as we had an Australian lady in our boat and thought that she had better see all there was to be seen after travelling half round the world. Then we heard a splash and saw a silver boy diving about under the water among bubbles of pearl. For the Blue Grotto is so laid out that nearly all the light in it enters under the water, or so it seems. I might have asked Pietro, with his knowledge of physics, to give me the scientific explanation; but somehow I did not think of it in time. Anyhow there was more light on the diving boy than on anything else in the grotto, and the display was, as the boatman had predicted, beautiful. The Australian lady seemed rather dazed by the show, but I think she considered it worth the franc.

There was not much to be done in Capri and not much time to do it in. We lunched in a restaurant at the same table with a Japanese gentleman, and Pietro bathed in the sea. Then it was time for us to embark in our steamer which brought us back safely to Naples.

Palermo

To Duncan Alexander Forbes
and his Brother
Mansfield Duval Forbes

Chapter 29 My Buffo

THE day after our excursion to Capri was our last in Naples. Pietro took me up the Vomero and proposed a visit to the museum of S. Martino. Hope springs eternal in the human breast, and I went in with him, hoping, as usual, for silver snuff-boxes and being put off with the most ordinary collection of screw-topped jars. But there was the great view over the bay as compensation.

Then we had our tickets to buy and our luggage to get ready and to convey to the *Solunto*, which started about 7.30 p.m. for Palermo. This night voyage between Naples and Palermo is one of the best bits of travelling in Italy. A boat goes each way every night, starting about 7.30, sometimes delayed by the loading of cargo, and arriving about 7.30 next morning, and here again there may be delay. I am so pleased about it, perhaps, because I have usually had the good fortune to cross in calm weather. We sat down to dinner as the *Solunto* left the quay, and came on deck again as we were clearing Capri. After a few strolls round I went to my berth and slept as soundly as I sleep in my own bed at home.

The next morning was brilliant. I got up, dressed, went on deck, and found Pietro. He had not been to bed as I had, he had passed the night lying on the tarpaulin over one of the lifeboats—rather comfortable, I should

think. While drinking our black coffee and munching a few biscuits we set ourselves to look for Sicily. There it was at last, distant but clear in the sunlight, and the sea as blue as the sea can be—regular, downright, royal blue. We seemed to be going slowly along, but Pietro declared that we were really going fast, and perhaps we were. Anyhow Monte Pellegrino on our right and Capo Zafferano on our left became gradually more and more distinct, and presently between them I made out the Foro Italico and the Porta Felice, many indistinct houses behind them, and, rising above the houses, several churches and the Teatro Massimo. We entered the port and neared the quay. Lots of people were there to meet us, and I looked and looked till at last a figure waving his hat resolved itself into my buffo, Alessandro Greco of the Marionette Theatre. He had seen me first and was making gestures and telling me all sorts of things; we had quite a long conversation, he on the quay, I on the *Solunto* with Pietro to help as interpreter.

Alessandro went to the war and was wounded. He came home, was nursed in hospital, recovered, and went back to the war. He was wounded again, came home, and was nursed again in Palermo. He sent me a photograph of himself taken while he was in hospital; in it he looks more like a corpse than a living man, and I suspected that he had made himself up for it. I did not say so; I merely wrote condoling. He replied in December, 1918, after the Armistice, thanking me for my inquiries and continuing thus:

I am not yet well and spend most of the day in bed. But now we can shout "Victoria-a-a! Viva Guido Santo! Viva Carlo Magno!" I had feared that we should never meet again, that for me the world had come to an end, and that my eyes would look on nothing but the Spectre

of Death. But now, in a moment, the Armistice has brought new life, the sun rises once more, and hope returns. Men are fraternizing, hearts are beating, chickens are growing up from the egg and are nearly ready to offer their giblets to Enrico and Alessandro. How soon are you coming to Palermo? Have you grown older or younger? Is your hair whiter or darker? If we do meet again, it may be only for once, but if we do, then, oh then, I shall be content to die, and I pray that death may come to me when we are together and I have my head in a dish of interiori di pollo.

Always your affectionate brother,
ALESSANDRO (BUFFO).

Besides his wounds he had the Spanish grippe in Palermo and nearly died. I knew most of this, and my knowledge helped me to understand his gestures on the quay. He pointed to what he calls his heroic leg, and told me that an operation was not necessary, as had been feared, and showed me that he was not lame; but he had suffered unspeakable pain. I took a letter from my pocket, and, pretending that it was the photograph of him taken when he was ill, indicated, with my handkerchief to my eyes, that I had cried on receiving it. He understood; his shoulders went up to his ears, he separated his hands, and glancing towards the water still lying between us, made a gesture which clearly signified: "Well, yes, of course you did;" and there are all your tears."

Pietro was on his way home to Trapani in the *Solunto*, but he had three or four hours while the steamer remained in Palermo, so we took him with us to my hotel and gave him lunch before he continued his journey; after which we packed him off, and the buffo left me to rest while he returned to his labours at the teatrino.

Later in the day I called there and found a performance in full swing. Against a background of tents, armour, and as much of a regiment of black soldiers as could be

crowded on to the stage, the Emperor Agolante of Africa was fighting single-handed against Orlando and Don Chiaro. I did not grasp the course of the battle because they all killed each other repeatedly and rose again to continue fighting after I had given them up; so that I was probably mistaken about their being dead, and they were only intended to be resting. I could not ask the buffo, because he was behind, working Orlando. It all became clear in the end; the Emperor Agolante ran away leaving Orlando and Don Chiaro in victorious possession of the stage. The curtain fell, and the buffo was free to come and talk to me.

He told me that Don Chiaro is the brother of Girardo, Emperor of Austria. I inquired how it came about that Orlando could have for a friend the brother of an Austrian.

"I know," he replied. "It was all a mistake. You and I should never make friends with an Austrian or a German—nations with whom we can have no sympathy." And he went on to tell me more about it; but the mechanical piano began to play, and a good deal of what he said escaped me. I was like the diving boys in the port at Naples, only that I failed to catch a larger proportion than five or ten per cent. of the wealth of information thrown to me by the buffo. After the curtain had fallen again, he said:

"That portrait over the proscenium represents my grandfather, Gaetano Greco. There is a legend here in Palermo that my grandfather died mad because he had the ambition to make his marionettes move and speak of their own accord. He foresaw wireless puppets and actually got so far as to make Bradamante, the sister of Rinaldo, exclaim: 'Oh!' all by herself, and then he died. But my father says that the legend is not true."

I was inclined to agree with his father, more particularly because I had heard similar legends about other marionettists in other towns.

"It is so," he replied. "In Catania they believe it of the grandfather of Giovanni Grasso, in Caltanissetta of Don Angelo Mazzalia, in Trapani of Don Federico Lucchesi."

"It is a picturesque idea," I said. "I suppose it takes the public fancy and they repeat it."

"Yes; but that doesn't make it true. It is like that other legend that there are no honest men in London."

"Do they say that, Buffo?"

"Yes; they say that all the honest men were killed at the front and that only the shirkers survived. But I know that that is not true, because there is one honest man in London who has come to Palermo to salute his friend the buffo."

"Thank you, Buffo, it is very good of you to talk like that. I think I could find you a few more. You see some of us were too old to go to the war; they would not have us; so we did what we could at home."

Then the curtain went up, and Astolfo, the English cousin of Orlando, came on in golden armour.

"I wish," said the buffo, "I wish you would go behind and speak for him. It would make the performance so much more realistic."

There was a conversation among the marionettes on the stage about some battle in which Carlo Magno commanded his French knights when they were attacked by the brutal enemy, and one of the paladins said:

"Ah, yes, and if Astolfo of England had not brought his men to help, the French would have been defeated."

When this remark was made, the audience applauded

tremendously, and the buffo told me in confidence that his father had interpolated it as a compliment to me, and the people had understood, because " Of course," said the buffo, " every one can tell you are an Englishman—they have only got to look at your clothes."

Then there came one whom both Astolfo and I took for a pilgrim, but he was a devil in disguise. He deceived Astolfo further by conducting him to a grotto. The English are always courageous, so he bravely entered. It was full of invisible devils—that is, invisible to Astolfo ; we saw them ; the air was thick with them. They cleared off and were replaced by a personage in the semblance of a lady. She said :

" Prince of England, Astolfo ! I crave of you one favour."

" Who am I," replied Astolfo, " that I should refuse anything to one so beautiful ? "

The lady said : " I beg that you will love me."

Here again, could any one, and especially could any Englishman, refuse such a request ? Astolfo could not, and did not. He forgot the war, he forgot England, he forgot his wife, his family, his duty, his honour, he forgot all that he ought to have remembered, and he embraced the lady.

The devils returned and made fire in which the loving couple ascended as the curtain fell.

I did not wait for more, because the theatre in which the marionettes are now performing is a small place, much smaller than the theatre they were in before the war ; and the mechanical piano is a much more powerful one, and I dreaded a whole performance at one sitting. Besides, it was nearly over. So I waited in the sunshine till the buffo was ready, and then he took me to call on

his sisters; for they do not now live over the theatre, they live in a house some little way off. He told me as we went along that Astolfo was under a spell, and that the beautiful lady was another devil in disguise, which I had already suspected.

He also told me that before Italy came into the war his family were making arrangements to migrate to South America to join his brother Gaetano, but then Alessandro was called up, so they remained in Palermo. They were nearly ruined by the war, and had to give up the old place and all the puppets.

"Now," he said, "in this teatrino we are doing very well; but Gildo has married and got a job in the Pubblica Sicurezza, so that my father and I have to do it all by ourselves, and it means three performances a day, at five, at seven, and at nine."

"And besides that," I said, "there is all the preparation."

"Yes," he agreed, "and the mending of the broken marionettes, and making all the dragons and devils and the machinery."

"And I know something else," I said; "the buffo is always thinking of his voice and regretting that he cannot turn up the teatrino and go about the country singing in opera companies and in concerts."

"That is true," he replied, "but I must stick to this so long as my father lives. I did go on a concert tour in North Italy a few months ago, however, and enjoyed it very much."

"I hope you had great success."

"Success, yes. But I want more practice."

At the house we were received by Carmela and Giovannina. The other sister, Carolina, has gone to live in

Buenos Aires, where she is married. Carmela was engaged, but has had the misfortune to lose her fidanzato, who was killed in the war. Giovannina is engaged to a young fellow named Michele, who is not yet demobilized. When they told me this, I turned to Giovannina and said :

" But, my dear young lady, is this quite fair ? I understood that you were engaged to me. Why have you treated me thus falsely ? "

She made some excuse about my staying away for seven years, and I said :

" Could you not even wait till the war was over ? "

The buffo came to her rescue by saying : " There is something about which I desire to make a suggestion. In your books you say that our teatrino is in the Piazza Nuova. This is liable to mislead English and American visitors who are thinking of coming to a performance, because we are now in the Piazza Beati Paoli. Will you be so kind as to destroy all unsold copies of your books and issue a new edition with a fresh chapter making the correction ? "

" That is a capital idea, Buffo. But if you move again— ? Must I go on chasing you half over Palermo with new editions till the end of time ? "

" Perhaps you had better give our address as Poste Restante."

" It will not be necessary," said Papa, " because I shall never move again. I shall end my days in the Piazza Beati Paoli."

Carmela now proposed that she should play me something on the piano. I glanced towards the instrument, guessed the state of things, and said tentatively :

" Is your piano in fairly good health just now ? "

"It is not quite in tune," she replied, "and some of the strings are broken; but if you don't mind that I shall be pleased to play to you, and I know you are fond of music."

Papa kindly intervened, and I promised to call again when the piano should have been restored to sanity.

There were two small dogs, whereas I remembered only one, whose name was Italia. I inquired into the causes of the change, and they told me that these two are the children of Italia, and their names are Eritrea and Tripoli.

"You remember," said the buffo, "that they were born in the house. Their mother died during the war. I did not write and tell you. I should have had to say 'Our Italia is no more,' and I could not do that for fear of the censor. He would not have allowed the letter to pass. I made a coffin and buried Italia in a corner of the garden of our cousin. My sisters wept and said, 'What have you done with Italia? You have thrown her away in the street.' I told them what I had done, and they visited her grave with flowers. They went every month for a year, and then every three months for another year, then every six months for another year, and now they go on the anniversary of her death."

It was getting time to bring my visit to a close. I made my farewells and the buffo took me back to my hotel. On the way I said:

"I am sorry that Orlando was so silly as to make friends with that Don Chiaro."

"Yes," he agreed. "Don Chiaro has the most charming manners, and Orlando was deceived. He has not yet found him out. But by the time you are back from Mount Eryx they will have quarrelled, and you may be in time to see the duel between them. It will end by

Orlando's cutting Don Chiaro in two with his sword, La Durlindana, from his head downwards."

"Oh! So friends do sometimes quarrel in Sicily?"

"They do. But you and I are not that kind of friends. We shall never quarrel."

"I don't think we shall," I replied. "And anyhow I cannot imagine our cutting each other in two from the head downwards."

"No, I don't think we shall do that. You see, you and I are a good deal like one another."

"Well, I don't know about that, altogether. Don't you remember, when we were going to Catania, you said that I took a gloomy view of life, and that I could never be a Sicilian buffo?"

"Ah yes; but a great deal has happened since then, and it is not the buffo who is talking to you now; it is Alessandro."

"I had been thinking that you were perhaps rather more serious than you used to be."

"And does not that make us still more alike?"

"We were always interested in the same things."

"Oh yes, we are very much alike. I thought so years ago when we were making The Escape from Paris. Do you remember?"

"Remember! Of course I do. And our walking about the streets to collect incidents to put into it—the barber's boy in his white jacket with the black kitten in his arms."

"We did not have to go far to find him," he said. "He was just opposite your hotel."

"And the suffragette with the mousetrap," I said.

"I could not get her in when it came to the performance; but we had the Cold Dawn of the following

morning, and the people were puzzled just as you said they would be."

"I have always regretted that I could not stay to see that show. Of course you could not have got all those people on to the stage and through the subterranean road to Montalbano."

"It was easier for you to put them into your book than for me to put them on the stage; but it doesn't matter."

"No, it doesn't matter. There we are, agreeing again. All the same, I cannot help feeling that I ought not to be agreeing with you that we are so much alike; it seems as though I were praising myself; for you are one of the best men I ever knew."

"That is what I meant just now about you."

"Thank you very much, Buffo—no, I should say Alessandro. But you know there always must be this difference. Do you remember my saying once: 'If I were not an Englishman I should choose to be a Sicilian,' and you replied: 'And if I were not a Sicilian I should choose to be—a Sicilian'?"

"I wish you had forgotten that. It was rude of me."

"In so far as it was rude I forgot it at once. All I mean is that there must be this difference. You are a Sicilian Sicilian, whereas I can never be more than an Englishman Sicilianized; which, according to the proverb, is the devil incarnate."

"No one would ever take you for any kind of devil, except a stage devil."

"Well, Buffo, if it is your stage, and you are pulling my strings, I shall not object to that."

So we said "Arrivederci." I promised to see him again on my return from Mount Eryx, and he went off to prepare for his next performance.

Mount Eryx

To Miss Florence Kathleen Butterworth

Chapter 30 Compare Berto

BEHIND Trapani rises Mount Eryx, a solitary mountain close to the sea, about 2,500 feet high, famous in classical times as the site of a Temple of Venus. On its summit is the town now usually called Monte S. Giuliano. It was all very well for Pietro, being at Naples, to choose the Monday boat, drop me at Palermo and proceed to Trapani; he only wanted to get home, but I had my buffo to see in Palermo and wanted a few days there; I did not, however, want seven days, and the boat only goes on to Trapani once a week, so I had to get there by train.

The difficulties of travelling in Sicily since the war are less than I had expected, still there are some. The want of labour, of coal and of rolling stock, together with the increase in the price of all three, are among the obvious results of the war, and I should like to think that all the other difficulties can fairly be put down to the same cause; but I suspect that some of them may be due to my being seven years older than I was the last time I was here. There is a train from Palermo to Trapani which starts at 5.40 in the morning, and only one other, which starts at 5.20 in the afternoon; they both stop everywhere and take, theoretically, that is according to the time-table, about six hours; in practice they often take more, sometimes much more, and they are usually full. I do not

recognize trains that start before ten o'clock in the morning, and a train which, after a long journey, arrives at nearly midnight and then only if it is punctual, is not an ideal one. So I took the afternoon train from Palermo and stopped short for the night at Mazzara.

It was a slow but lovely journey. We passed through groves of orange and lemon, among orchards of olive, by ravines, and over bridges. There were fields of rich red earth planted with vines interspersed with figs, and a man leading a donkey among them. There were hedges of prickly pear overgrown with scarlet geranium and diversified with agave. When nature invented the agave she must have been dreaming of telegraph poles. She tried to outdo them by making hers shoot up higher, and near the top she gave them short branches, almost at right angles, with some kind of growth on them like the bits of ginger-beer bottle which grow on the poles and carry the wires. When we were near Castellamare and close to the sea the train was going so slowly that a guard got down, picked some flowers that were growing in the sand-dunes, brought them back and gave them to a lady passenger. I had heard of such a thing being done in England, but had always thought it to be a gibe at the railway company for not being able to go faster ; here it was, however, actually passing before my eyes. Then we stopped where there was no station, near a place where people were bathing in the sea, and several passengers got down, went and leant over the railings and talked with the women and babies who had deserted the bathers and come to salute us.

Segesta is visible from the train sometimes. I knew where to look for it and the light happened to be right. Just for a moment I caught a glimpse of the theatre on

the hill and of the Greek temple below it. In due course came Castelvetrano, which is the place one stays at for the night when going to see the ruins of Selinunte, and soon afterwards we reached Mazzara. We were not late, so I suppose all the dilatoriness had been allowed for in the time-table. Next morning I went on to Trapani in the train which had left Palermo at 5.40 a.m.

I really have nothing to complain of about the journey or the inaccessibility of Trapani and Mount Eryx. I was on my way to the Mountain to stay with my compare, Berto Augugliaro, who is a chemist in the town on the top, and his being my compare is one of the consequences of the *Odyssey* having been written at Trapani and Mount Eryx. It works out like this : If a real place is to be found which can be identified with that described in the *Odyssey* as Scheria, it must have only a small river and that not near the town ; there must be a low rock in the sea off the harbour or off one of the harbours ; it must be on a coast looking west ; there must be a big mountain close by ; and there must be islands. All these features Butler found together in maps of Trapani and its neighbourhood and nowhere else in the Mediterranean. Accordingly he came to Trapani itself, where he found many more natural features which confirmed his view that Trapani and the neighbourhood are being described in the poem. He made lots of friends, brought me with him, and introduced me. After his death I returned, made more friends, and this led to my becoming the compare of Berto. Now, if the *Odyssey* had been written in Asia Minor, and Butler had identified the Scheria of the poem with a city in the neighbourhood of Smyrna, I might have become compare of some one living in a place very much more inaccessible than Mount Eryx.

Mount Eryx

On arriving at Trapani I looked out of the carriage window, and the first person I recognized was the porter, Michele d'Amico, to whom I confided my luggage, then Berto, who had come down from Monte St. Giuliano to meet me, and then my godson, Pietro Lombardo. Between noon, when the train arrived, and 6 p.m., when the automobile took us up the Mountain, we were overworked; first we had to get lunch, and then we had our shopping to do; it does not sound much, but the number of friends we met and had to salute was what took up our time and energies. The shopping was for Berto's children. Of course, I ought to have brought them toys from England, but toys are bulky; and it turned out best as it was, because Berto knew what would please them and chose a couple of motor-cars for the boys and a doll for the girl. I also bought for myself five sponges which I saw by chance in the toy-shop: they were fished up at Sfax off the African coast, and were only five francs each, i.e. twenty-five francs, or about eight shillings the lot.

We clattered through the streets, past the church and cloisters of the Annunziata, out into the country, up the sloping roads, past the cottages, and so to Paparella, where we were delayed by post office business. Then we went on up the Mountain, and the serious part of the ascent began; for the ascent from Trapani to Paparella is easy and gradual, whereas the ascent from Paparella to the Trapani gate on the Mountain is rapid, and the panorama becomes more imposing and more fascinating with every zigzag. We were met by Berto's wife, Giuseppina, who is my commare, and by various brothers, sisters and cousins, and also by the three children, viz. Luigi, my godson, usually called Luigino, who will be nine in October; Giuseppe Enrico, usually called Peppino or

Ricuzzu, who is nearly eight ; and Antonietta, who is six. These three children constitute the reply of the Madonna di Custonaci to the prayer offered up by the arciprete on the occasion of Berto's marriage with Giuseppina. In accordance with a pretty Sicilian custom they greeted me by first kissing my hand for respect and then kissing my cheek for affection.

Chapter 31 Ida

THEY gave me the room of Antonietta, and I am afraid I was a good deal of a nuisance to them, because Antonietta had to be put up somewhere else, and the family was necessarily squeezed to take me in. I do not believe, however, that I can have been so much of a nuisance as another member of the household, who shares with the donkey, the chickens, the turkeys and the duck, the stable which is under the house. This other member of the household is a monkey who has been given to Berto. She is about two feet high when she stands up, and her name is Ida. Berto declares that she is a suffragette. This cannot be merely because she is a troublesome spinster, for he must know that there are married suffragettes. I fancy he is making some obscure reference to her views on things in general as evidenced by her behaviour. She has, however, at least one pleasing habit—some one has taught her to salute, which she does by touching the top of her head. I offered her a fig, and she saluted with her right hand as she took it with her left. She will also do it for nothing if you merely say "Saluta, Ida." Whether she is a suffragette or not, she is one kind of vegetarian, and will not eat meat or fish; she eats bread, fruit, vegetables and eggs, and drinks coffee and milk, also wine when she can get it. Unfortunately, among her bad habits is that of stealing the eggs, and

sometimes she kills a young chicken. She is, in fact, such an intolerable nuisance that Berto intends to give her away as soon as he can find a sufficiently distant friend willing to receive her.

One day, while I was with Berto, Ida escaped and caused great anxiety, not lest she should be lost for good —she often escapes and they know she will return when she is hungry—but because when she breaks loose she spends her time climbing about the roof, carrying the piece of chain, which dangles from her girdle, as a lady holds up her dress in front of her. Part of the time she got off the roof and was on the balcony tearing the vine to pieces, destroying the young grapes, pulling the flowers off the plants that are there in pots, throwing down the pots and smashing them, and trying, but trying unsuccessfully, to get into the house through the windows and doors; we were all the time also trying, and trying successfully, to keep her out. In the end she was caught, as usual, and punished by being put to pass the night in a garden.

Berto has two gardens. The one selected for Ida's punishment is not yet complete, the other is perhaps over-complete. He bought it for I am afraid to say how few francs, but it was not a commercial deal—other considerations entered into the bargain. It is too much overgrown with artichokes, cherries, apples, pears, fennel, quinces, medlars, parsley, figs, and a vine on a pergola. Besides all which, it is one of the best sites in the town and commands about a third of the great view looking towards Monte Cofano. We spent several hours in it gathering the cherries which were just ripe and were afterwards made into jam. The medlars are what they call winter medlars, not ripe yet, but I think they are the same as

ours and not what they call Japanese medlars. We gathered quantities of artichokes, and next day had them with a boiled chicken. We only ate the big piece, the best part which one eats after picking off all the small pieces ; but there must have been fifty or sixty artichokes used to make that one dish.

Chapter 32 Luigino

THE goats have been told to call at half-past seven. At eight o'clock Berto comes into my room saying, "Buon giorno, Compare," and carrying a tray on which the commare has placed a pot of hot coffee, a jug of fresh frothy goats' milk, and some biscuits made on the Mountain. Then he leaves me to get up when I feel inclined. The scarcity of water, one of the inconveniences of Sicily, is not felt on Mount Eryx, because there are springs, but water is not yet laid on in the houses, it has to be fetched, and they have fetched plenty for me. I wash, dress, and go out. There may be a cloud, or there may be a tearing wind, but nearly every day while I was with Berto this time it was clear and still. As I wandered along through the town I saw my godson playing in the street with his friends.

"Good morning, Luigino."

"Good morning, Godfather. Where are you going?"

"I am going to the balio."

"Excuse me, but you are going in the wrong direction. Let me come and show you the way."

"That is very kind of you, Luigino. You know, your streets up here are rather confusing."

"We do not find them so," he replied with a smile.

"That is because you have lived here all your life."

"Yes," he said with pride, "nearly nine years."

The balio is the garden which has been laid out on the highest part of the Mountain between the town and the castle. The only defect of the balio, if it can be called a defect, is that you cannot see the whole of the panorama from any one point: you have to look over the dwarf wall on one side to see half of it, and then over the railing on the other side to see the other half. I pointed out this defect to Luigino, and he replied sympathetically:

"Never mind, Godfather. We will go up the tower."

He took my hand and led me through the streets, saluting any of his friends whom we passed, and I asked:

"Why are all you boys not in school, Luigino?"

"Because it is too early."

"Do you like school?"

"Pretty well."

"What do they teach you?"

"The History of the World."

"That is a large subject. Do you begin at the beginning?"

"We begin with the Creation."

"Well, you couldn't begin much earlier, could you? The Received Chronology says that the world was created 4,004 years before Christ, and he was born nearly 2,000 years ago; so that you have about 6,000 years of history to learn."

"It will be a long while before I shall know it all."

"Courage!" I replied. "You will have to work hard, but you are still young. Is that the only subject they teach you? It would be quite enough if you knew it thoroughly, for then you would know all that there is to be known."

"They teach us also——" but by this time we had

arrived at the castle. We knocked at the door. A man opened to us and Luigino told him what we wanted. He invited us in and showed us the tower. We went up the winding stairs and out on to the roof. From here one can look all round and observe how the Mountain stands solitary near the sea; roughly speaking, the panorama towards the west is bounded by the sea and the horizon, and towards the east by the campagna and the distant mountains.

I said: "There is something over there towards Monte Cofano which I never saw before, a new terrace and a monument. What is that, Luigino?"

"It is the obelisk to the memory of those poor men from the comune who fell in the war."

"Ah, yes; that has been put up since I was last here, of course. It makes me shudder when I think that your father might have been among them."

"He wanted to go, but they would not let him. They made him stay here and attend to the sick people."

"So he stayed and did his duty. We will look at the obelisk presently. Just before I left London, I was reading a book about Garibaldi and this part of the world, and I should like to try and see whether what I read agrees with the real place. I want to see particularly the islands."

We turned and looked towards the west. Facing us was an immensity of blue sea and blue sky with the horizon that divided them so high up that I was reminded of the view on a china plate. I do not know how far off the horizon is when the spectator is 2,500 ft. up, but a mariner could no doubt make the calculation. The sea and the sky were both so bright and so blue and so much alike that if the horizon had not been there they would

have appeared to be all one. Above it were innumerable gulls cruising and diving in an ocean of sunshine ; below it, fishing-boats and the islands floating in another ocean of ripples. The islands in the morning light were delicate, unreal phantasms of a translucent fawn colour, their recesses, crags, ravines and irregularities casting shadows of saffron and amber with every detail faint but distinct.

" That book," I said, " was all about Garibaldi and his thousand volunteers and how they landed at Marsala in 1860."

" There is Marsala," said Luigino, turning to the left.

" So it is," I said, " on that tongue of land which runs out to sea with the lighthouse on the point."

" That's it," he said. " I can see the houses."

" So can I," I replied. " I was there once on May 11."

" Then it was a festa," interpolated Luigino.

" Yes, it was the anniversary of Garibaldi's landing, and the music was parading the town with the Garibaldi Hymn and the Marcia Reale."

" I am glad they landed," said Luigino. " I have heard my grandfather tell of their voyage."

" And I have read about it in that book. It was what we call a near thing. They lost touch with one another in the darkness of the night between May 10 and 11, because one of the ships went off to locate one of the islands—Marettimo. It might have been a catastrophe, but it came right, as so many of the smaller misadventures came right during the great adventure of that expedition. Now let us look at the islands and let us begin with Marettimo."

" That is the one on the horizon."

" ' All highest up in the sea towards the west,' as

Butler used to say, quoting from the *Odyssey*. Have you come to the *Odyssey* yet, Luigino ? "

" What is this *Odyssey* ? "

" It is a poem in Greek written by a woman up here and down in Trapani about 1,000 years before Christ was born, that is to say, about 3,000 years ago, or half-way through the 6,000 years covered by the History of the World which you are learning. You would hardly have got so far yet."

" Not yet ; and I don't think I ever shall, because women do not write poetry books."

" She did. She was the daughter of the king who reigned down in Trapani in those days. He may have been an ancestor of yours—probably was, and in that case she must have been one of your distant great-grandmothers. She called herself Nausicaa. She went out with her maids and did the family washing down by the Tonnara di S. Cusumano, where was the nearest fresh water she could find, and there she met Ulysses and was kind to him."

" What nonsense you talk, Godfather."

" Not at all. There is the ship of Ulysses ; you can see it for yourself in the sea down there, just off the point."

" Where ? What do you mean ? There is not any ship."

Far below our feet on the promontory which juts out from the Mountain and points upwards towards the horizon and the gulls lay Trapani. Everything in the town was clearly defined—the streets and houses, the churches, monasteries, barracks, palaces, the railway station, the port full of ships, the stores full of wine, of salt, of tunnies, of oil.

"You see Trapani, Luigino," I said.

"Yes, down there."

"That's right. Now look at the point, and just to the right of it in the sea there is a something. Your ancestor, the king of this country, lent Ulysses a ship in which he went home to Ithaca. Neptune was very angry about it and, when the ship came back, turned it into a rock, and there it is. Doesn't that prove it?"

"That rock is Lo Scoglio di Mal Consiglio."

"Of course it is: the Rock of Evil Counsel, because it was an evil counsel that was followed. Neptune did not want Ulysses to get home."

"Why not?"

"Oh, it's too long to tell you any more now."

"That's because you cannot think of any more. I believe you are making it all up."

"All right, but you'll find I'm not. You'll come to it in time. It's part of the History of the World, though perhaps they will teach it to you rather differently. Now, about these islands. What is that one under Marettimo? Levanzo, isn't it?"

"Yes; and the one to the left is Favignana."

"I see. The one with the town on it. Very well; then this is what happened, and your grandfather might have seen it if he had come out into the balio on the morning of May 11, 1860—that is, sixty years ago the other day. Garibaldi's two ships, after they had found each other, went past Favignana and then round the lighthouse on the point and along the other side of the tongue of land and—oh, I say, Luigino, look there! What is that in the distance? Another island?"

"It is Pantelleria," exclaimed Luigino, jumping up and down with excitement.

"Now mind, Luigino; you're not making this up, are you?"

"No. That is Pantelleria."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, yes, yes! We must tell Papa that we have seen Pantelleria this morning."

"It is the island of Calypso," said I, musingly.

"I wish we could see Africa," said Luigino, not attending to me. "And Tunis. Let us look for Tunis."

But we could not see Tunis, nor anything of the African coast, only the island of Pantelleria. So, when our excitement had subsided, we traced the course of Garibaldi's march instead. First we followed the fringe of the coast cut up into salt-pans and dotted with windmills curving round from Trapani to Marsala. In the bay another island is visible, Motya, but it is low and close to the shore, almost lost in the sea, almost like the farther edge of another salt-pan. The land on the other side of the bay runs out to the tongue of land where the lighthouse is. At Marsala are the offices of the English wine-merchants who grow their grapes in the neighbourhood and ship their wine from the harbour. There are also Sicilian growers and exporters of wine, among whom Florio is the greatest, but an Englishman naturally thinks of the English ones; and the Sicilians think of them also, and remind one that in 1860 our English ships, while protecting our wine merchants, incidentally helped Garibaldi to land.

"Garibaldi went through Salemi," I said.

"There is Salemi," said Luigino, pointing out its whereabouts.

"And there," I continued, "he was joined by 800 men

from Mount Eryx under Coppola, one of your uncles, Luigino."

"Do you mean my uncle the Sindaco?"

"No, sixty years ago Cavaliere Coppola was not old enough to go campaigning, even if he was born. But it was one of his family, and there is a stone on his house with an inscription telling about it."

"Of course there is; I remember."

"I can see Mazzara on the coast, where I stopped the other night on my way here."

We saw many other places, too. There was Selinunte, where the temples are lying in shattered heaps; and Campobello, where are the remains of the quarries, and where they show you a round block of stone lying on its side still waiting to be rolled to the site of the temples and incorporated in a column. That stone drum does not know that soon after it was excavated, about 400 years before Christ, Selinunte was destroyed by the Carthaginians, and that is why the temple was never finished.

I wanted to see Segesta, but Luigino said that it was hidden. He showed me the monument which contains the bones of those who fell fighting with Garibaldi in the battle of Calatafimi and, as it is close to Segesta, we knew whereabouts the temple must be.

"Godfather," said Luigino, "will you be so kind as to excuse me. I ought to go to school."

"Certainly; but please don't leave me all alone up here on this tower. That man might lock me in. Let us go down together, and you can leave me in the balio."

Thereupon we descended and found the man at the bottom; he spoke in dialect to Luigino who turned to me and said:

" He wants to know whether you would like to see the Well of Venus."

I said I would see it some other day, and we proceeded through the balio.

" You ought to see the Well of Venus," said Luigino. " It is quite near, in the grounds of the castle."

" What do you know about the Well of Venus ? Who was Venus, Luigino ? "

" A Great Lady—una Madama."

" So she was," I agreed, " and so she is still. But some say that she is one of the inevitable processes of nature, imperious as the scirocco or the sunshine. And others say that she personifies the Mystery of Birth. Up here on your Mountain she is usually called the Madonna di Custonaci. Others——"

Luigino was not listening ; he had scampered off to continue his researches into the History of the World. Before turning the corner he shouted back to me :

" I'll come and fetch you in time for luncheon, Godfather."

Chapter 33 The Lizard

THE other half of the panorama was waiting on the other side of the balio, so I strolled across through the garden with the roofs of the town on my left and the castle on my right. And there, sheltered by the castle, is the stone prie-Dieu where the women go and pray to the Madonna when her picture is down at Custonaci, because from here they can see her sanctuary ; when the picture is on the Mountain its place is over the altar in the Mother-church, and they go there to pray.

The morning air was full of the scent of the broom. There were hollyhocks : I brought some of their seeds home with me one autumn and they grow in my garden in Maida Vale. There were delphiniums, oleanders, scarlet geraniums, and bushes of marguerites and of scabious. Scarcely anything was moving—a few butterflies, swallow-tails, red admirals and sulphurs. Here on the eastern side of the balio is the obelisk erected to the 545 men of the comune of Monte S. Giuliano who fell in the war. It stands on a circular terrace which has been thrown out at a prominent and almost overhanging corner of the Mountain, and the terrace is held up by a wall. I take my seat on the steps of the obelisk and look about me.

A lizard, not very busy this morning, has come out and keeps on running about in the sunshine, stopping to listen

every now and then with his head on one side. But I remember to have been told, or to have read somewhere, that all reptiles are deaf. If so, then he is only pretending he can hear and wishing he could. Not like that other reptile, the psalmist's deaf adder, that stoppeth her ears which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely ; though why, being deaf, the adder should trouble to stop her ears has never been clear to me. Nor do I see what she does it with, she has only one tail and ears in the plural. The lizard has hands and feet, and I should like to see him stuffing his pretty little fingers into his ears. But he wont do that : he is all agog for hearing. If he is really deaf I can only suppose that he is pretending to hear in the hope that if he pretends very hard he may in time develop the power : developments as astonishing have been brought about in the course of evolution.

Butler believed that the variations which occur in living beings, and the accumulation of which results in species, are mainly due to the desire of the organism to vary in particular directions, and to purposive action taken in obedience to that desire. In this way the organs of hearing may be developed, and the power of using them may be acquired by some lizard of the future who will bequeath them to his descendants. But my lizard must do more than merely pretend that he has already developed the organs and acquired the power. I might as well expect to be able to play Bach's Chaconne by merely pretending that I can. Joachim could play it, I might argue, why not I ? I do not possess the requisite instrument, but then a microscopic examination of the baby Joachim would have revealed that he was not born ready equipped with a Stradivarius violin and a Tourte bow ;

nor did he make them himself; he had to acquire them. Anyone who ardently desires them can get them more easily than the lizard can acquire organs of hearing. The lizard must make them himself if he wants them. He is in the position of the first violin-maker, that pioneer who succeeded by ardently desiring, by trial and error, by practice and familiarity. The lizard's difficulty will be primarily to make his instrument, and, as he is making it as he wants it, he will, during the process, develop the power of using it. The violinist's chief difficulty is to learn how to use the instrument which has been made for him by some one else.

Joachim had lessons—at least, so I have been told. Why, I might argue again—why should I believe that? Why may I not believe that he was lucky enough to be born, if not with fiddle and bow complete, at any rate with the power to use them as soon as he got them—the gift of some fairy godmother? I did not see him having his lessons and, as the lawyers say, "De non existentibus et non apparentibus eadem est ratio." It is but a silly maxim, drawn from the out-of-sight-out-of-mind practice of the ostrich, and embalming a principle that is no good as a rule of life: it appeals to the indolent, who optimistically expect everything to be done for them with no effort on their part, but it does not conduce to progress. Fairy godmothers are getting scarce, and there is bad luck as well as good luck. If shipwreck is to be avoided, it will be by cunning designedly taking advantage of accident, extracting advantage even from unforeseen misfortunes. Luck is as the wind, an influence from outside, that bloweth where it listeth and sometimes bloweth to destruction. Cunning is the intelligence within the soul of the mariner that knows how to control the rudder, to

trim the sail, to force the wind to his service and to guide the ship into the haven where he would be.

It will take you many days of persistent and cunning striving if you are to acquire the power of playing the violin, possibly more days than it took Joachim; but with desire and effort it can be done in a man's lifetime. Memory will communicate to the You of to-day what was learnt by the You of yesterday, and by degrees you will accumulate skill. If you are a lizard, inheriting no organs of hearing, it will take more than many days; it will take you many generations to develop them. Generations are to the striving lizard as days are to the student Joachim. The knowledge gained by the successive individuals who go to form a growing man can be passed on, only slightly impaired, day by day, from You to You; whereas, the knowledge gained by the successive generations which go to form a species can only be passed on from father to child after it has been crossed and diluted by knowledge coming from the mother. The child must sort and re-arrange what it receives, and this causes delay. There is, however, no hurry. Nature is an oriental, and does not distinguish between hurry and delay. Here, as the lawyers say again, "Time is not of the essence of the contract."

I do not think that my lizard on the steps of the obelisk has got beyond thinking that it would be rather nice if he could hear, and he seems to find it an absorbing thought; at all events his attention is not distracted by the view, he leaves that to me. And there it is, spread out in front of me, on each side of me, and below me. Straight ahead is the immense rocky triangular brown mass of Monte Cofano, solemnly watching. All is sea to my left and land to the right, and the land part is less extensive than

on the western side ; the campagna here, instead of being thirty miles across, is not more than seven or eight, but it gets broader towards the right before disappearing behind the castle, because the mountains which bound it recede.

Down below in front of me, between Eryx and Cofano, is a bay, and away to the right there are collections of houses on the campagna, the largest and nearest being Paparella, where the automobile stopped. There are the country seats of wealthy Trapanesi who have made their money out of tunny fisheries, out of vineyards, out of olive trees and, especially, out of salt. Another village is S. Marco, another Custonaci where is the Sanctuary of the Madonna. There, near the shore, the land is more dark green than brown, and that is called Bonagia. They tell one that the word means Good-land—Bona being good and Gia some form of the Greek word for land. But they do not insist on the derivation, they offer it as a pleasing suggestion. If you prefer it you may consider Gia as a corruption of Gita, a jaunt ; then Bonagia will mean the place to spend a happy day. Or again you may think of it as Bona Spiaggia—Spiaggia being a shore, because it is near the sea. Whatever may be the derivation of the word, Bonagia is a favourite locality, and is considered to be fertile land.

" Godfather ! Where are you ? It's time to come in. Are you ready ? Where are you ? "

I shouted in reply : " Here, this way, near the obelisk. We must not keep Mother waiting. Besides," I added as Luigino came running up to me, " I do not want to stay here all day mooning over a panorama in the company of a lizard. But I've not yet finished with the view."

" You can come out again after lunch," said he.

" Look at my lizard before we go ; he has been playing

about on the steps of the obelisk all the morning. What do you think he is playing at ? "

" He is waiting for noon, listening for the bells to ring."

" Who's talking nonsense now, Luigino ? The lizard cannot hear. He's only pretending."

" We'll ask Papa about that when we get in."

" Do you suppose that Papa knows ? "

" Papa knows everything."

We strolled back through the balio among the flowers and the butterflies. The scent of the broom was over, as though its business hours were from dawn to noon. We stood looking over the dwarf wall down on Trapani and up along the jutting promontory to Levanzo, to Marettimo, and to the sky from which the gulls had gone. The morning was passing, and the sun, shifting from the left, was casting shadows where light had been, smothering the horizon in a filmy haze, and destroying the boundary between the two oceans of water and air. The colours had died on the islands ; they lay dark—their ravines no longer distinguishable—dark on a sea of burnished silver. The houses of Trapani had lost their detail and, with the cornfields, vineyards, salt-pans and windmills, were taking their noonday siesta. All was steeped in distance, bathed in light, and drenched in a stillness that was broken only when a goat-bell tinkled, when a bird cried, or when a young shepherd, seated on a stone, whistled, and his invisible mate heard him, understood, and replied.

" We cannot see Pantelleria now," I said.

" No," replied Luigino, " nothing is so distinct as it was before I went to school. Why is that ? "

" You are not the only one who has had the same experience."

" But why is it, Godfather ? "

"You are dazzled by the light of so much knowledge all at once," I explained.

"Very well," said he, politely agreeing, but not paying much attention. He was still straining his eyes to find Pantelleria again. "It seems a pity," he said.

"It is a pity," I agreed, "and things will never look the same again; but school will not go on for ever."

"I mean," he said, "it is a pity we did not come out earlier. On such a day we might have seen Africa if we had been earlier, and perhaps Tunis."

"And if," I said, humouring him and amplifying, "if we had come out earlier still, we might have spied the city walls and Widow Dido in the moonlight with a willow in her hand, watching the ship of Æneas as it sailed away from Carthage. But now that we cannot see Pantelleria it's no use looking for Carthage."

"Godfather, why do you talk of Carthage? Don't you mean Tunis?"

"This Tunis, Luigino, was Carthage. And Dido was Queen of Carthage, and Æneas was a friend of hers. You'll read all about them in another poem some day."

"Did my great-great-grandmother also write this other poem?"

"No; this other poem was written in Latin by a man. It is about the wanderings of Æneas, just as that Greek poem is about the wanderings of Ulysses. By the by, Æneas was a son of your Madama Venus."

"Do you mean he was born here?"

"On the Mountain, like you? I don't see why he shouldn't have been. His father died somewhere about here, and they had games and sports in memory of him and boat races in the sea down there. As to whether Æneas was actually born on the Mountain, he must have

been born wherever his mother was at the time. He may easily have been another of your ancestors, and that would bring Venus into your pedigree as another great-great-grandmother."

"Go on, Godfather, make up some more."

"I'm not making up so much as you think. Venus was here a great deal in her time. She lived in her Temple where the castle now is, and she washed Æneas in that well in the garden."

"Oh, I say, Godfather, that shows you are making it up; there is no water in her well."

"Not now, perhaps, but how do you know that there was none then? Anyhow, we can pretend there was, and that she washed him. This Mountain of yours has always been rather a place for make-believe."

"All right, let's pretend—like the lizard. And did Æneas enjoy it? Antonietta enjoys being washed; it makes her laugh."

"Æneas was born a long while ago; still, I suppose children laughed in their baths then, just as they do now, unless the water was too cold."

"How long ago, Godfather?"

"Oh, I don't know, but long before your other great-great-grandmother, Nausicaa, wrote her poem. You'll come to it all in time."

"Not to the washing."

"Well, never mind about that. You'll come to most of the rest of it as you go on. And yet, I don't know. It seems to me that you are not proceeding with your studies in strict chronological order, or you would have learnt about some of these people before you were taught about Garibaldi and about Tunis."

"I was not taught about Garibaldi. It was my Grand-

father who told me. He remembers the landing. And I did not learn about Tunis. Papa went there and told me about it himself."

"Why, it must run in the family!" I exclaimed.

"What must run in the family?"

"Going over to Africa. It's what Madama Venus used to do. Why did papa go?"

"Just for an outing—a change."

"So did she. When the people saw all her doves deserting her temple up here and flying away across the sea, then they knew that she had gone; and presently, when she thought fit, her doves brought her back from Carthage."

"Papa went in the steamer."

"People do now; it goes once a week. It's the steamer in which Pietro and I came from Naples to Palermo, starting on the Monday night; it dropped me at Palermo on the Tuesday morning, brought Pietro here the same afternoon, and then went on to Tunis that night."

"You don't mean to say that she was really carried across the sea by pigeons?"

"Why not? She had to take what she could get. Steamers were not invented—they belong to modern life—whereas doves are history—or perhaps poetry; anyhow, they belong to a bygone age as a means of transport."

"What fun! I wish they would take me over!"

"You can go in an aeroplane some day, and that will be nearly as much fun. Do you know, Luigino, I'm inclined to think that to you Garibaldi and Tunis are modern life, because you have been told about them by people who have seen them; whereas Æneas and Carthage are history, because no one now remembers them personally,

and you have to learn about them from those who read them up in books."

"Of course," replied Luigino.

"Now I should say that Garibaldi was passing into history all his life. His landing at Marsala, and his battle near Calatafimi, and all his other exploits became history as soon as they were accomplished. If not then, certainly, on his death he became part of history. When I was your age I used to look upon things just in the same way. For instance, there was Napoleon III, he——"

"Oh, come along," interrupted Luigino. "I want to tell papa that we saw Pantelleria this morning."

Luigino has inherited from his great-great-grandmother, Venus, some of her scirocco quality: it is no use trying to do one thing when he wants you to do another. So I broke off. We looked round once more, down on the campagna and over the sea, and then went back through the town to the house.

Chapter 34
S. Luigi and S. Giovanni

WE found Berto and the commare ready for luncheon, and also Antonietta ; but Ricuzzu was late, and we began without him.

"Papa," said Luigino, "Godfather says that lizards are deaf. That's not true, is it ? "

"Eat your spaghetti, Luigino," said the commare, "and don't talk so much."

"If godfather says so, of course it is true," replied Berto.

"Bravo Berto ! " I said. "That's something like a compare. I'll do the same for you some day. But are not all reptiles deaf ? You must have studied natural history at the University for your diploma."

"I don't remember. Chameleons are said to be deaf and so are snakes."

"The Bible says that adders are deaf," said I, and I quoted the words of the psalm and stated my difficulty about the adder unnecessarily stopping her ears.

"It doesn't mean that," he said. "We had a man up here in the spring, an Englishman returning from India, where he had been studying the subject. Adders are wriggley creatures, and can bite you however you hold them : the snake-charmers are afraid to have dealings with adders. But cobras can only hurt you if they can

strike, and the snake-charmers know how to hold them safely."

"But if they are deaf they cannot hear the music."

"They don't hear it; they see the charmer's motion and imitate it. The charmer does not like to admit that he is afraid of adders, so he says: 'We cannot charm those stupid adders because they won't listen; they stop their ears.' But he knows that the adders are deaf, and knows that the people do not know it. He is only making an excuse for not taking the risk. And the charmer is making the same excuse to-day that he made in the time of the psalmist."

"I see; having called them deaf in the first part of the verse, the poet amplifies and explains in the second part."

"Exactly. Hebrew poetry."

"Well, that settles snakes—or at least adders and cobras. Now lizards and other reptiles; aren't they all deaf?"

"I cannot remember. We must look it up, and I believe we shall find that some reptiles can hear and others cannot."

"How stupid!" exclaimed Luigino with his mouth full, "they ought to be all alike."

"So they ought, Luigino," I agreed; "it would save a lot of bother if everything was all alike, wouldn't it? I should not be always wanting to look up questions in books. One cannot afford to travel with a complete British Museum library nowadays; I couldn't even afford to bring toys for you children from London."

"Another result of the war," said Berto, sympathetically.

"There's Julius Cæsar now, and Herbert Spencer and his mutton chops and a few other questions; I'm making a list of them, and——"

"And he says," shouted Luigino, "that Venus flew over the sea to Tunis. But she didn't, did she? She couldn't."

"They have all done it," replied Berto. "Astarte, Aphrodite and Venus—the doves of Venus carried her over to Carthage."

"There!" I exclaimed triumphantly. "What did I say? And papa knows everything! You ought not to make any difficulty about it—you who have seen the Madonna being carried down to Custonaci."

"That's quite a different thing," objected Luigino.

"Not at all," I said. "It's the modern equivalent. The Madonna is carried up and down between Custonaci and the Mountain just as Madama Venus used to be carried backwards and forwards between Mount Eryx and Africa."

"And Astarte began it," added Berto, "because she was a Phœnician and Carthage was a Phœnician colony."

Here Ricuzzu came in, and was invited to explain why he was late; but he was too hungry and too breathless to talk, and so was allowed to recover himself and eat in silence. And all the time Antonietta was behaving like a woman of the world aged about five-and-thirty, asking me how we got on in London during the air-raids, begging me to take a little more sauce, and offering me a flower for my buttonhole.

"There's something else you wanted to tell papa," I reminded Luigino.

"What was that?" he asked, looking up from his plate.

"What did we see this morning?"

"Oh, Pantelleria! Papa, we saw Pantelleria."

"Yes, dear, yes," replied papa, calmly pouring himself out some more wine.

"Papa! you don't understand," shouted Luigino; "we saw——"

"Don't talk so much, Luigino," said his mother, "go on with your dinner."

"Antonietta," said Berto, "godfather is ready for a cigarette."

It seemed like a snub for poor Luigino, but he was not in the least put out; he came up to me, put one arm round my neck and said in a wheedling voice:

"Godfather, let me come out with you again this afternoon. I want you to make up some more."

"No," said Berto with decision. "Godfather is tired and is going to repose."

So Antonietta lighted my cigarette for me and Berto took me to my room. As soon as we were out of hearing of the children he began to laugh and said:

"Please don't go out. There is a secret; Luigino does not suspect;" and he whispered the secret to me before shutting the door.

Secret or no secret I am usually invited to repose after lunch, and I usually accept the invitation and retire to my room. Sometimes I do repose—actually lie down and go to sleep—but I need not do so; I am complying with the spirit of the invitation if I read or write. One has to write letters, or at least post-cards, for it is a mistake to neglect one's correspondence. On the other hand, he who never makes a mistake never makes anything else; so, as far as possible, I make the mistake of doing anything else rather than write letters. On this particular day I wrote a few post-cards, but there was not time for many because of the secret which primarily concerned Luigino. He had been told nothing about it or he would not have said so airily that I could go back to the balio in the

afternoon. It was that the music was coming to salute him.

It was Monday, June 21, the festa of S. Luigi Gonzaga; and this disclosed to me that there are two saints named Luigi, the other being St. Louis, King of France, whose day is August 25. My godson, according to a Sicilian custom, was given the name of his paternal godfather, who is Luigi, and this means Gonzaga. June 21 is thus the onomastico of every one named after the same saint. Consequently the music came and played several pieces in the piazza outside the house in the course of the afternoon. There were four clarinets, six brass instruments (trombones and bombardons), a pair of cymbals and a side drum. Another Luigi lives within earshot and was being saluted by another band, and the two bands performed antiphonally. I did not fully understand all about why there are two bands—some political difference is at the bottom of it, and it is better to keep out of political differences when one is in a foreign country. I imagine that my godson and the other Luigi are of opposite parties and so could not use the same band, and that these two bands had agreed temporarily not to cut each other's throats by performing simultaneously.

There are also two saints called Giovanni—S. Giovanni Battista, whose day is June 24, and S. Giovanni Evangelista, whose day is December 27. S. Giovanni Battista is the patron saint of compari, no doubt because the chief kind of compare is he who holds the baby at the font and thus becomes godfather of the baby and compare di battesimo of its father and mother. The compare di battesimo, if he does the thing thoroughly, has also handed to the priest the ring at the wedding of the father and mother of the baby, and

has thus already become compare di anello of the parents ; and this I did at Berto's wedding.

When it was our usual bedtime on June 24 and I was about to retire Berto recommended me not to do so yet because a surprise had been prepared. I obediently acquiesced and presently heard it coming. We all collected in the passage as the surprise grew louder and louder and entered the courtyard. It was a repetition of Luigi's band playing vigorously. They came into the house and passed us, each musician bowing to us separately. To do this he had to turn the upper part of his body sideways, instrument and all, because they did not stop playing or walking until they came to the end of the piece, and by that time they had reached the salone.

Berto pointed out to me that the bombardon players had got inside their instruments, and he called them La Guardia Nera. This was because a few years ago I had sent him a Scotch shawl, the tartan being that of the Black Watch, 42nd Highlanders, and Berto speaks of his shawl as La Guardia Nera or the Quarantaduesimo Alpini. During the afternoon of the day of our festa I had been showing him how to put it on as a Scotchman wears a maud, across his chest, over his shoulders, and tucked in behind.

Chairs were provided, and the commare brought a tray of wine. One of the trombones was acting as their chief ; they all stood up with their glasses of wine, and the chief trombone announced that they had brought their music and were saluting Berto and his compare. They drank, sat down again and played their second piece. The commare brought a tray of liqueurs flavoured with peppermint. I watched my opportunity, held up my glass, and announced that I was drinking to the health of

the musicians. This was appropriately received, and we had the next piece. They played a few waltzes, a mazurka, three or four Neapolitan canzonets and especially "Gioia Mia" which was then a favourite, a gallop, and some pieces of an undefined nature, usually in six-eight time in a minor key, and there was one march. Berto and his mother danced one of the waltzes. She is an old lady—at least, not old, sixty-eight perhaps—and danced with great spirit and did not appear to be in the least fatigued. During the proceedings I caught sight of Angela, the maid, in the entrance to the house dancing with my umbrella for a partner.

Berto told me that all the musicians are shoemakers except one, and he is a carpenter and joiner. They are not professionals; they play for the love of it—that is, they are amateurs in the original sense of the word. Their music may have been trivial—it was; but it was neither clever nor was it in rag-time, and I found it pleasant. If it had a fault it lay not in the choice of pieces, nor in the execution, but in the conditions of performance—the room being too small for the volume of sound.

Chapter 35 Cofano

EVERY day is the day of some saint, if not of many saints ; but every saint's day does not concern us personally. Consequently, there is not always a secret or a surprise, and I am usually free to do as I like. When I am tired of reposing I come out and roam about the town, or go to the balio again, and on the way I call upon Berto, who is in his farmacia making up prescriptions and talking to his friends. Ida is tied up in the window of the next house, and sits there saluting and receiving offerings of vegetables and fruit from a crowd of boys who keep just out of reach. Sometimes a boy gets too near and Ida leaps on him and picks his pockets. That is how she managed to escape the other day. She has a cord attached to her piece of chain, so as to give her more space for her evolutions. The boys were teasing her, as usual, and she got so wild and exerted so much force in trying to get at them that she broke the cord.

Presently I leave the farmacia, leave Berto with his friends and Ida with her admirers and, Luigino being in school, I wander off alone and lose my way for twenty minutes or so among the narrow, labyrinthine streets, until at last I find myself in the balio again, sitting with my lizard on the steps of the obelisk and looking out towards Cofano across fertile Bonagia. Not only is Bonagia a favourite locality with the people, it is also a

favourite locality with a hawk who is hovering over it, looking for chickens or anything else good to pounce upon which he may spy in the yards and gardens. He is about on a level with my eye and quite close. I wish I could hover. "If I could do that, I could while away many a weary afternoon," as Harry Nicholls used to say in one of the pantomimes, standing listlessly at the wings, watching the contortions of the serpent-man. I do not know how to set to work to acquire the power. It would not do to imitate the lizard and begin by pretending that I can do it already—that would lead to a nose-diving disaster, and I should not be able to transmit any experience to my descendants. I cannot follow Joachim's plan and take lessons, because there are no professors of hovering. Perhaps the nearest approach we shall ever make to it will be to teach the aeroplane to hover, and probably I shall not be here then. Besides, I should accept it only as a pis-aller. I want to hover by myself, as the hawk does, without any machinery, and for that I may have to wait till I enter the life after death. But if my dead body is to return to its elements, it will go to pieces, and my brain, which I use to work my memory, will go with it, and that won't do; for I shall want my memory, otherwise how shall I know that I am I? I shall not enjoy whiling away the weary afternoons of eternal life unless I can remember the weariness of the afternoons of this temporary life when I could not hover.

The hawk is taking too much of my attention, as the lizard did the other morning. But their movement contrasts with the stillness of Cofano and of all around, and compels me to consider them. It is true that the hawk does not move so much as the lizard, he keeps in one place while hovering; nevertheless, I know that he is like other

living things, he will not remain there for ever. The hawk, for all his hovering, brings into my mind phrases about being here to-day and gone to-morrow. He knows of other yards and gardens. When I look on Cofano, sleeplessly watching over Bonagia, I think of the Sphinx. The hawk makes no mystery of being on the look-out for his dinner, and the fertility of Bonagia has something to do with his presence here. But Cofano is an incarnate mystery. I do not suppose that the fertility of Bonagia is due to his watchful presence; that fertility is more likely due to something in the soil or to the presence of springs. Cofano seems to be proposing some eternal riddle which, though essentially unaltered, yet takes on a different aspect every moment with the shifting light; there is constant change of detail within the immutability of his mass.

Cofano is so magnificent that he compensates for the absence of islands. And yet there is an island, another phantasm, Ustica, not so far off as Pantelleria and more often visible. She hovers, like another hawk, over the promontory of Capo S. Vito, which runs out to sea behind Cofano and bears on its point another shimmering light-house to match the one beyond Marsala on the other side. There was a summer night, many years ago before the lighthouses were built, when Oberon sat upon a promontory and a mermaid was piloted past him on a dolphin's back,

> And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
> To hear the sea-maids' music.

And I wonder to myself whether he sat on Capo S. Vito or on Lilyboeum. It ought to have been one, and it might have been either. I settle the question in favour

of Capo S. Vito and try next to determine whether I like best gazing on the opalescent sea to the left, on the exuberant campagna to the right, or on the mystery of Cofano straight ahead. Looking down on the campagna is like looking on one of those views taken from aeroplanes, it appears to be all flat; nevertheless, as I discovered when I drove about among its fertility, it is full of undulations and actual hills. I should like to draw it from here, putting in all the fields and houses and the shadows cast by the hills. I should make a dreadful mess of it, for it is not a subject that lends itself to being sketched; but I should like to try. The corn has been cut, and lots of burnt sienna would be wanted for the brown stubble, and downright yellow to mix with it in places; in other places some kind of faint pink, and there are bare rocks which would take a deeper pink. Then there are the roads that wander among the fields. One is sure that each road knows its own business and why it makes its turns, but it is not obvious to the spectator. As with the gestures of the people—a stranger from the north feels sure that every movement has a meaning, though he cannot always guess what that meaning is. These roads would require some mixture of a greyish, yellowish, dirty white. I could not finish the sky or the sea until I had been back to the shop for more cobalt; and cobalt alone would not do, for there are passages of a luminousness which is not on the market. There are also passages in the sea of a glowing green; and near the shore, where it is shallow, I can distinguish something that looks like a submarine landscape—a reduced echo of the campagna. How to treat Ustica would be another difficulty: it would give no information to show her as she appears—a something muffled in the haze over Capo S. Vito. A

compromise might have to be made involving a clearer day when she can be seen distinctly for what she is. Cofano could not be omitted, but I should have to settle which is his best time. Perhaps his crags and ravines are most lovely when the evening light shows them up; but who could ever settle which is the best time for his colours? Golden brown, faint rose, deep sienna, radiant green, and never the same for ten minutes at a stretch. Another compromise might be necessary—a dangerous proceeding, because the shadows give one away, and there are shadows everywhere.

There in the curve of the bay, about half-way to Cofano, is a small white bungalow which I should like to put in, but, maybe, it would appear too small to be recognizable. It is the caserma, where I once spent a night with the coast-guards. I had gone to Custonaci to salute the Madonna, whose picture was then at home in her sanctuary, and my friend the brigadier came to the village to meet me, took me back with him to the caserma and gave me his bed for the night, he having to go out on business immediately after supper and to remain out till the morning.

I stood at the door of the caserma and watched the sun set behind the islands. It was the death of the god. I was awakened next morning by the completion of the miracle: he rose again and looked in at my window. I thought of Astarte, who, centuries ago, reigned on Mount Eryx, set and rose again the following morning as Aphrodite. Aphrodite reigned, set and rose again as Venus. Each in turn was tenant for life of the Mountain, and the evening came when Venus also set, to rise again next morning as the Madonna, the present trustee of the Mystery of Motherhood. We do not know who preceded

the first, but we do not doubt that she had predecessors who fulfilled the desires of their makers, and who reigned up here in days long before the creation of the world according to the chronology of Luigino. We do not doubt that the present goddess will have successors and, if we could guess at the course of future civilization, we might foretell the form most likely to be taken by the next one. They resemble the shifting lights and shadows on Cofano ; they are of the hour, unessential, perpetually changing while the ultimate mystery remains unsolved, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.

The brigadier's nocturnal business was to guard the coast all along the bay from Cofano to Mount Eryx ; he returned just before the sun was up and, after we had breakfasted with his companions in the caserma, he accompanied me to Custonaci. We took leave of one another in front of the Sanctuary of the Madonna, saying " Arrivederci " as one does in Sicily, promising to meet the following year ; and I returned to Trapani not knowing that I should never see him again. But so it was to be, for he was killed in the earthquake at Messina.

Chapter 36 The Old Man

MY reminiscences were interrupted by the sound of footsteps; I turned and saw an old man coming from behind the obelisk. He smiled at me and said:

"Good day."

"Good day," I replied. "Have you come out to contemplate this wonderful panorama?"

"Oh! as for that," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "our eyes are so full of the panorama that we are blinded to its wonders. No, I came to read the inscription."

I rose and we read the inscription together.

Butler in his life of his grandfather quotes a remark made by Dr. Parr to Dr. Butler: "It's all very well, Sammy, to say that So-and-so is a good scholar, but can he write an inscription?" And we know that Dr. Parr was serious, because it is recorded in Boswell that when he was requested to write an epitaph for Dr. Johnson he modestly replied: "I leave this mighty task to some hardier and some abler writer." It was only after repeated solicitations that he yielded and composed the inscription which adorns Dr. Johnson's monument in St. Paul's Cathedral. And truly to write an inscription is a difficult thing to do—even more difficult than to translate a good inscription into another language in such a way that the reader cannot determine which is the better

Mount Eryx

The Inscription on the Obelisk on Mount Eryx.

Ne l'almo amplesso materno
Erice accoglie
Gli spiriti eletti
Di tutti i suoi figli
Che per i termini sacri d'Italia
Non invano cadendo
Passarono
Dalla vita alla storia.

Translation.

Into the embrace of their nursing-mother
Eryx gathers
The chosen spirits
Of all her sons
Who falling not in vain
For the sacred frontiers of Italy
Passed
From life into history.

The Old Man

The Inscription in the Liceo Ximenes, Trapani.

Da queste aule
Altrici fecondi di generosi propositi
All'invito della patria in armi
Pel trionfo del diritto e della giustizia
Barracco Epifanio; Cammarata Vincenzo
Genna Carmelo; Mannome Giuseppe
Messina Francesco; Sammartano Antonino
Zamueli Vittorio
Con animo precocemente virile
Corsero ai cementi
E caddero pugnando
Per rivivere nei secoli
XXIV Maggio MCMXX.

Translation.

From these halls
Wherein generous intentions are brought to fruition
At the call of their country in arms
For the triumph of right and justice
Barracco Epifanio; Cammarata Vincenzo
Genna Carmelo; Mannome Giuseppe
Messina Francesco; Sammartano Antonino
Zamueli Vittorio
Assuming in boyhood the responsibilities of men
Rushed to the ordeal
And fighting fell
To live again in the ages
XXIV May MCMXX.

rendering of the sense. While trying to translate into English the inscription on the obelisk I remembered being in Sicily once with an Englishman who was a scholar. After dinner the waiter brought a liqueur labelled "Scacciapensieri"—which means "Thought-chaser." My friend at once translated it "Begone dull Care." Nothing could be better; it overshadows the original and is as good as Sterne's "No deceit in a bumper" for "In vino veritas." I cannot compete with it, but I have done my best.

"Well," said the old man, "and what do you think of our inscription?"

I had not got so far as to have formed any definite opinion about it, and there was something in his manner which prompted me to temporize; so I said:

"It seems quite an appropriate inscription."

"Appropriate!" he echoed. "It is like most of the others. It promises no more than that after death we shall live again in the memories of our friends. There is another down in Trapani, in the Liceo Ximenes, which comes to much the same."

"It would have pleased you better," I suggested, "if the authorities had employed some one who believed in the Resurrection of the Body."

"I am not sure that they have not done so," he replied.

"Now you are puzzling me," I said. "Do you mean that the writer believes or that he disbelieves in the Resurrection?"

"I think that he was brought up to believe in it, that he has been reading scientific books, that he is ashamed of being thought to hold such a belief, and that he wishes us to suppose that he now believes in no kind of life after death except life in the memories of those who survive us."

"You manage to extract a good deal out of his few words."

"It is evident to me that he is uneasy in his mind about his belief. He is trying to persuade both himself and me of something of which he is uncertain. That is not the spirit in which to compose the inscription for a war memorial."

"What should you have written?" I asked.

"I do not know. But I should have remembered those who come here suffering. And I should have remembered that what I believe or disbelieve does not signify. If we consciously preserve our identity after death, then it will be so. If we enter into annihilation, then it will be so. No man's belief one way or the other can possibly make any difference to what is going to happen to us."

"Are you so certain of that?" I asked. "I had a friend who had thought much about evolution——"

"Evolution!" exclaimed the old man, interrupting me. "Why that is one of my subjects. The theories of the writers on evolution affected me profoundly at the most critical period of my life."

So I told him of a passage which is somewhere in Butler's writings and which the lizard had brought to my mind the other morning. Butler thought that, although we have no reason to suppose that man consciously preserves his identity after death, it does not therefore follow that he will never be able to do so. Adopting the assumption that lizards are deaf, we can admit that, if they ardently desire and strive to hear, they may, in the course of generations, acquire the power to do so. Similarly, assuming that man does not after death consciously preserve his identity, nevertheless, if he ardently desires and strives to do so, some future man may be born in

possession of the power inherited from his ancestors as a result of those ancestors having desired and striven for generations to acquire it.

The old man thought for a minute or two; then he said: "It is an ingenious hypothesis, but it ought not to be referred to in an inscription on a war memorial. That is an opportunity for soothing the afflicted, rather than for enunciating a speculative proposition. Consider for a moment. To this obelisk come widowed girls and weeping mothers looking for some crumb of sympathy to nourish the hope that one day they will be reunited to those whom they have lost. And what do they find?"

"I see," I replied, "they are told that the fact of their husbands and sons being dead will be incorporated into the History of the World at its proper date."

"Precisely," he agreed. "But the widows and mothers do not want to be told something which they knew before. They went out looking for bread, and they are given this stone, in the making of which thirty words have been employed."

I was silent, thinking. Then an idea came to me and I said: "We have an expression in English——" I hesitated, not sure whether to go on. A look in his face encouraged me. "We sometimes speak of 'a pious fraud.'"

The old man in his turn sat silent and remained so for a long while. Then he rose, smiled and held out his hand.

"You English," he said, "are a wonderful people. 'A pious fraud.' That is what is wanted. Good day. I am glad I met you. The English helped Garibaldi to land at Marsala, they helped us to win the European War, and you have helped me again this afternoon. Good day."

Chapter 37 Speculations

I RETURNED to my seat thinking of Ernest in *The Way of All Flesh*:

No man's opinions can be worth holding unless he knows how to deny them easily and gracefully upon occasion in the cause of charity.

The hawk had moved out of sight, gone to some of those other yards and gardens that he knows of, to hover now, perhaps, over some village on the Marsala side of the Mountain, over Dattilo or Xitta, Spagnuolo or Paceco—Paceco where Alessandro Scarlatti was born, if he was not born in Trapani itself. That is another name with a derivation. They say that Paceco is a corruption of Pace teco, which in Latin is Pax tecum; but they do not tell one this with any conviction. It is offered as hardly more than a memoria technica, as they offer the derivations of Bonagia.

The hawk had gone, but there was my lizard, still running about in the sunshine and doing his best to support the view that lizards can hear. If he cannot, then as a piece of play-acting his performance was wonderfully realistic, and I must remember to recommend him to Giovanni Grasso for study. In the meantime let us pause for a few paragraphs and rest on our oars in a parenthetical backwater of speculation. Let us suppose for a moment that man has not the power of consciously surviving death. Then each of us will personally enter

into annihilation. The prospect would probably be repellent to Luigino if he were to contemplate it; but to his godfather it is not so. As one grows older one becomes less enamoured of the idea of eternal life, and more inclined to acquiesce gratefully in the idea of departure in peace into a dreamless sleep. But it is no use crying for the moon, and both godfather and godson must agree with the old man that whatever is awaiting us, if it is to be so, so it will be. There is nothing more to be said about it; the idea of annihilation does not pullulate suggestively.

Let us now suppose for another moment that man, not having the power of consciously preserving his identity after death, nevertheless, by ardently desiring and striving to acquire it, will do so in the persons of some of his descendants. Ought I to help by desiring and striving also? If the power is not to come till years after my death, it will make no difference to me. For me to share in it I ought to have begun desiring and striving in the person of some remote ancestor, countless ages before any recorded goddess reigned up here. Perhaps I did. It may be that there has already been just so much desiring and striving by us in the persons of our ancestors that the result is even now hanging in the balance, and the desire of one more is all that is necessary to turn the scale in time for me to be the first of those who will have the power. It may come any day, as a sport comes in descent with modification. But if it comes to me I shall be too late to meet the brigadier or to meet any of those who will have died before me. Thus I shall not meet many whom I should like to meet even more than I should like to meet the brigadier. On this supposition I shall meet too few people.

Now for another moment let us suppose that man has and always has had the power. Then I shall meet too many. I do not know whether there is any agreement among men of science as to how long man has been on the earth ; probably not, nor does it much matter because any estimate must alter with fresh discoveries. I fancy I saw some hundreds of thousands of years mentioned recently. I would rather not know more exactly ; I might blurt it out to Luigino, and it would only discourage the dear boy to be told that the world has been in working order for so many more than his six thousand years. Fancy having to meet after death all those innumerable, tedious old people who must have died during all those thousands of centuries ! And all those others who will go on dying, and come trooping along after we are dead ! It does not do to think about it. It makes me as giddy as I become after reading in astronomy books about what there is, or may be, beyond the Milky Way. That old man was right in wanting controversial questions kept out of war inscriptions.

There is yet another supposition. Not that I think these suppositions supply any answer to the Great Riddle ; they are nothing more than suggestions of how to look at it in different lights ; they alter the appearance of it as the shifting shadows alter the appearance of Cofano. We might desire, and succeed in obtaining, the power in some kind of after life to meet a selection of those who will have predeceased us, and a further selection of those who will die after us. I do not feel sure that any such plan would work. It would lead to unpleasantness if I, for instance, desired to meet, we will say, Dido, and if she did not want to meet me. " Who is this upstart ? " she would ask ; and I could not insist. In any kind of life

after death the desires and feelings of others will have to be considered, as they have in this life.

One or other of these suppositions may foreshadow what will happen, and there must be other possibilities which I have not thought of. Whatever happens, if it is to be so, so it will be.

Finally, and without any supposition, in the Life of the World to Come we shall meet one another in a different sense. As Butler says in his sonnet beginning "Not on sad Stygian shore":

> Yet meet we shall, and part, and meet again
> Where dead men meet, on lips of living men.

It is obvious that this kind of vicarious life must in a greater or less degree fall to the lot of every one, and no crying for the moon about it. We meet in this way before death, and sometimes are conscious of it. It may be anything from Fame down to Gossip. It is not even necessary for those who meet thus to have been physically born. Hamlet meets the Three Musketeers, Uncle Toby meets Emma Woodhouse, Candide meets Prometheus, and they all meet their own and each other's creators. Only the other morning Dido and Æneas were meeting Garibaldi and his Thousand on the lips of Luigino and his godfather; and Mr. George Trevelyan and Virgil were of the company; or if not they were close by and their influence was felt. This is the kind of life after death that is promised by the inscription on the obelisk. The old man condemned the writer not because he was preaching false doctrine, nor because he was being otiose, but because he was unsympathetic with the suffering mourners. There is no escaping this kind of vicarious immortality; but a war memorial is not the place in which to insist on it.

Dr. Parr was also right when he said that being a good scholar is not enough. To write an inscription for a war memorial the scholar must know how to steer between saying what he believes and what it is judicious to avow. Moreover, as it is impossible to please all, he must be specially careful not to offend the least of those who come grieving for their loss. No war memorial that I have yet seen solves so well as our cenotaph at Westminster the problem which must present itself with every record that is put up, and yet the designer, as I have seen pointed out somewhere, has kept his own opinion in the background ; no one can tell from the monument what he personally thinks, any more than we can tell from the plays what Shakespeare thought about the life after death. To this cenotaph come those who say that there is no Resurrection, neither angel nor spirit. They find an empty coffin raised on a pedestal and three words : " The Glorious Dead." That is all they see ; and for them the emptiness of the coffin symbolizes the emptiness of the expectation of any kind of life after death. They pass on satisfied. But there come others who hope for more, who look up with the eye of faith and are transported into the region of : " Why seek ye the living among the dead ? He is not here, he is risen." For these the hollow stone upon its pedestal becomes as the bread of life. The widowed girls and weeping mothers drop at its base their flowers, their wreaths of laurel and rosemary, and go home comforted.

Chapter 38 The Nuns' Dinner

THE next afternoon Berto took me to call on the nuns, and as we went along I asked him about my old man. I did not mention the subject of our conversation because one does not discuss with Berto the Immortality of the Soul. I merely said I had met him and asked who he was. Berto of course knows every one on the Mountain, but, though I described my old man very fully, he said he had never seen or heard of any one like him.

The nuns were at home. They are three old ladies who have retired from the monastero—that is to say they have been turned out—and are living in a house by themselves. Their monastero has been taken by the government and they receive a franc a day each. I thought of Ninu's aunt at Castellinaria. Suor Veronica is eighty-eight ; Suor Rosalia, eighty-two ; Suor Beatrice, seventy-eight. To one of the doors of the room in which they received us a paper was nailed, and on it was written in capitals the word " Mansuetudo " ; another door had the words " Amore di Dio " ; and a third, " Disprezzo del Mondo."

It is true that Sicilians develop and mature early, but these nuns were put away at the age of about thirteen, when they cannot have developed much knowledge of that world which they now say they despise. One may

learn little in a monastery, still one can always learn something. So I drew the, perhaps erroneous, conclusion that they had begun to find out that they had made a mistake, and to feel sorry that they had been in such a hurry to leave the world; and, having thus discovered that they had lost their tails, they were trying to persuade themselves and others that they despised the sour grapes.

I do not think they intended this conclusion to be drawn. It seemed to me that they were like the writer of the inscription in the balio, trying to persuade themselves and me of something which they believed to be doubtful, and that they would not have had those words up in such a prominent place if they had felt sure of themselves. Fancy an old lady of eighty-eight being so anxious to persuade us that she despised the world! When I was at school one of the masters had two rings; they did not appear to be of great value, still there they were and he wore them always, except that he tried to persuade us that he despised them by appearing without them during Holy Week. Fancy any grown man not being ashamed to let us know how great store he set by a couple of rather trumpery bits of finery.

Berto invited the nuns to come and dine with us on Sunday at five, and they accepted the invitation. He told me that he was arranging to give them brains for dinner because they have no teeth at their age; and he showed me the calf's head hanging up at the butcher's and through a large hole in its forehead we saw the convolutions of the brains for the nuns. To my great regret, however, the nuns did not come to dine, they were not well enough to go out that day. And I wondered whether it was the fact or whether it was an excuse and they never intended to come.

So, as the dinner had all been settled and prepared, Berto invited his father, mother, sister and brother instead. This is what we had. Soup. Hors d'œuvres. Chicken and turkey from the stable cut up, stewed together and served with potatoes and artichokes from the garden. With this we drank ordinary wine. Roast veal with salad from the garden. Fried rissoles of brains with potatoes. Boiled fish. With this we drank old wine. Lastly there was a broad, round, flat spongecake with custard and blobs of cherry jam on top; fruit, coffee, ices and liqueurs.

This was my last day, and the evening was made memorable by visits from many relations of Berto and of his wife. The music also came to perform a final serenade, and brought several retainers. There must have been at least fifty people in the house. And it all concluded by dancing and leave-taking and by my promising to come again next year and to stay for at least a month.

The day following, the leave-taking was continued at the Trapani gate of the town where they came to see me off. The children came too and Luigino said:

"Good-bye, Godfather; and please make up some more stories about my ancestors to tell me next year."

"All right, Luigino, there's plenty more for you, so much that I shall have to stay longer than a month to tell you all."

"I hope you will," he said. "Arrivederci."

The two arrivals and two departures of the automobile are the chief events of the day on the Mountain and many people were there to look on. Among the crowd was my old man of the obelisk. I tried to speak to him, but he avoided me; except for the marked way in which he

avoided me he appeared never to have seen me before; he got into the automobile and sat in a dark corner. I pointed him out to Berto, who still did not recognize him. But there was one standing by who knew him and who told us about him. He is called Mimi, which is short for Domenico, and he comes from Castellinaria. He would not speak to me because he never speaks to any one if there are others present. He was formerly a priest, but took to reading scientific books, threw up his orders and married. His wife died in childbirth, leaving him with one son to whom he devoted himself. This son was killed in the war, and Mimi has never been the same since. He is looked upon generally as a crazy fool—almost as though he were a harmless Ida. But those few who know him better say that he is an unusually wise and kind-hearted old man, and that he avoids people and puts on his eccentric manner because he does not want to be bored. Just now he is travelling round to all the various towns, making a study of inscriptions on war memorials because he has taken it into his head that he has been asked to compose one for Castellinaria.

I do not know what became of him. We both got out at Paparella, where I was going to stay with my compare Ugo Chizzoni, but the old man avoided me again. Perhaps he got out there hoping to find in Paparella a war memorial with an inscription that might give him a hint—something of more use than the one on the obelisk in the balio. It is a pity he refused to recognize me; I should have liked to hear his opinion about our cenotaph at Westminster.

Trapani

To Otto Keith Struckmeyer

Chapter 39 Compare Ugo

Casa Barrabini,
Trapani.
July 4, 1920.

My dear Compare Keith,

Thank you for your letter. I am delighted to know that you are coming to Italy, and perhaps as far as Sicily. I shall be returning about the time you are starting, and with a little management we might meet in Lombardy, or perhaps in Switzerland, but Lombardy would be better because it is Italy. If only we could meet here in Sicily! Anyhow please keep me informed of your movements, and I will tell you of mine.

As you will see by this address I have come down from Mount Eryx and am now staying with the family of my friend Peppino Barrabini. His father has been twice married, first to a lady named Giannitrapani, who died soon after giving birth to Peppino. Her father, Signor Giannitrapani, died a few months ago at a great age; he was a friend of Butler, and I remember him in the days when I used to come here with Butler, but I did not then know anything about the Barrabini family. Dr. Barrabini married, for his second wife, a lady named Poma by whom he had two children, Annita and Vincenzo. Vincenzo, who served in the war, is still in the north of Italy, not yet demobilized, and the house-

hold at the moment consists of Dr. Barrabini, his wife, Peppino and Annita.

I was first introduced to Dr. Barrabini by a Trapanese friend, some years before the war, when Peppino was in Florence on his way to England. I returned home that year by way of Florence where I made Peppino's acquaintance, and he afterwards came to London and stayed with my sister and me in our house in Maida Vale. After his return to Trapani I always saw him whenever I went to Sicily, and one year he introduced me to Ugo Chizzoni, whose mother was a Poma, a sister of Peppino's stepmother. Thus Ugo is a cousin of Annita and of Vincenzo, though not of Peppino. Ugo and I had few opportunities of meeting, because the war intervened; nevertheless we became great friends. While he was fighting in the north he sent me post-cards from the front and I followed his doings. He became a captain and was taken prisoner by the Austrians. He wrote to me from his prison camp for food, and I sent him parcels, or rather had them sent to him, from London. After the Armistice he returned to Trapani, and, in announcing that he was about to be married, honoured me by asking me to be his compare, or, as we should say for this kind of compare, his best man. He, being an avvocato, prepared the document which was necessary because I could not go to Trapani then; I signed and returned it, and the wedding took place.

This year, after being on the Mountain and before coming here, I stayed for a few days at Paparella with Ugo and his wife, who are in villeggiatura there in a country house belonging to his wife's family. It is in a lovely situation on the slopes of the Mountain and we spent most of the time sitting in the shade in the garden, looking out on the bay with Monte Cofano in front of us;

but we had to come in occasionally to get cool, for it is hotter outside than in the house. It is a mistake to travel so far south in this hot weather. And I have committed another mistake in coming just now, for I only get about sixty-five francs for one pound sterling which before the war was worth twenty-five. I ought to have come some weeks ago when not only was the weather cooler, but I should have got about a hundred francs. Think of that! Four times the pre-war value! People complain that the prices of things here have gone up, and so they have, but the price of the pound sterling has gone up more.

One day, while I was at Paparella, Ugo and I went to Tangi. We drove in the donkey-cart, and the donkey is named Musolino after the famous brigand. We took with us some food, and the caretaker at Tangi gave us bread and a flask of the family wine; we picnicked in the house, and drove back after the sun had gone down.

Tangi is primarily a hill on the campagna; as you look down on it from the Mountain you would not believe that there is a hill anywhere near, and when you get to it, it is only a small one. It gives its name to a collection of six or eight houses surrounded, or nearly surrounded, by a wall. Each house has outbuildings and a cantina where wine is stored, and the vintage is the great time at Tangi. The property formerly belonged to the six daughters and three sons of the family of Poma and now belongs to their descendants; this is how Ugo comes to be interested in it. Another of the houses belongs to Dr. Barrabini's wife who, as I told you, was a Poma; and once, while Peppino was in England and I was out here, my visit to my compare Berto on the Mountain was concluded by his driving me down in his donkey-cart to Tangi, where we became Dr. Barrabini's guests. I specially remember on that occasion

the prize bull which they had, an enormous creature; Berto called him a mountain of flesh, and christened him Mount Eryx. There was also a caper plant growing against a wall of the house with capers on it; I recognized it because Butler showed me one once. This year, when I was at Tangi with Ugo, there was the caper plant still flourishing, capers and all, but the bull had gone.

I doubt whether you fully grasp the significance of this compare business, indeed I am not sure that I understand all about it myself; but, inasmuch as you come into it, you ought to know all I can tell you. They have a saying: "Gli amici dei nostri amici sono i nostri." We are perhaps more familiar with it in its French form: "Les amis de nos amis sont nos amis." Now, my compare and I are something closer than merely friends, we are spiritually members of one another's families. In this way I am spiritually related to all Ugo's brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, aunts, and compari, and to all their husbands and wives, and he is similarly related to all mine. It may be that I even have some kind of interest in Tangi—only spiritually, of course. I was told on Mount Eryx that I am so closely related to my compare Berto that if his sister and I desired to marry, such a union could not be permitted—it would be almost as bad as wishing to marry one's own sister. This I believe to be an exaggeration. And it may be an exaggeration to say that you, as my compare, are related to Ugo and to all the members of his family, nevertheless it would seem to follow.

As to there being any relationship between Peppino and myself, I do not feel sure about it; I suppose there is not, because he is not Ugo's cousin; but I must be related to his half-sister and half-brother, Annita and Vincenzo, who are cousins of Ugo. And in a few weeks my relation-

ship to Peppino will be established through his wife, for he is engaged to be married to Pia Luna, whose mother was a Poma, another sister of Peppino's step-mother and of Ugo's mother, and therefore a cousin of Ugo. By a judicious selection of compari there seems no reason why one should not in time become spiritually a member of half the families in the island.

If and when you come to Trapani in the course of your wanderings, I hope you will not neglect to seek out some of these relations. I need not give you their addresses; ask the first person you meet in the Corso, and he will tell you. If you ask for Peppino, you must call him Professor, because he has passed some examination and is now Professor of English. As soon as you tell them who you are, and that you are a compare of mine, he and Ugo and all of them will do everything they can for you, and you will never regret having made their acquaintance.

I will tell you some more in a few days, next time I write. In the meantime

I am always your affectionate Compare,

ENRICO.

Chapter 40 Casa Barrabini

Casa Barrabini,
Trapani.
July 5, 1920.

My dear Compare Keith,

Now to continue where I broke off yesterday. On leaving Paparella the other day I came to Trapani, and Peppino met me and brought me to his house. While he was with us in London he became as familiar with our habits and customs as he is with our language. I am sure that he could pass an examination and become a qualified professor of them as he has become a professor of English. We used to give him a cup of tea in bed every morning ; it was brought to him in a brown Rockingham teapot which, after his return to Trapani, we sent him for a Christmas present. Here, every morning, Peppino makes tea for two in his teapot and brings it into my bedroom before I am up. Thus he transplants an English custom into his native town. We drink our tea and discuss our plans for the day.

Breakfast follows in the dining-room, the shady window of which looks out over a lagoon of the sea shut in by a breakwater of rocks. In this lagoon is a bathing-place, built on piles in the manner of a prehistoric lake-dwelling, and here boys are perpetually bathing. There they are, morning after morning, chasing each other in the water,

diving off the roof, playing at being Perseus and Andromeda, pretending that there is a shipwreck and that they are saving life at sea, drying themselves in the sun, and diving in again. To look at them out of the window is to anticipate what it will be when those of us who survive shall visit the memorial exhibition of the works of Mr. H. S. Tuke, R.A., which will not be held, I hope, for many years.

After breakfast we go into the town; Peppino wants to be shaved, or I want to buy something; but things never happen as we intend. One morning we met Domenico Corona, the coachman who, nearly thirty years ago when he was a boy of twelve, accompanied his father down from Mount Eryx, bringing in the carriage Butler, who had hurt his foot. Domenico had to be saluted, and his wife had to be inquired after. And we met the photographer with whom I became acquainted on the Mountain twenty years ago, and who has been so successful that he has been made a cavaliere, and has bought a palazzo in Trapani at the corner of two important streets. He invited us to luncheon for the next day. And there was Giovannino Lombardo, one of Pietro's brothers, now grown up; he recognized me, but I no more recognized him than I had recognized Pietro at Naples. And there were Peppino's friends also. What happens is that we meet one or two and form a group; lots more join, and the group swells; some drop off, others come; we move away, and collect more in the next street.

This morning we found ourselves near the shop of my compare Michele Lombardo, the father of Pietro, and here was Pietro and others of his brothers besides Giovannino; and their mother, my commare, had to be

inquired after. The first thing Pietro did was to restore to me the piece of coral which he had given me in Naples. I told you about this in my letter from Palermo. I gave it back to him when I was passing through Trapani the other day, on my way up the Mountain, so that his father might resharpen it. Pietro did not like my going up the Mountain without it, but his father was not in town that day, so I could not have taken it except as it was. He said it was a risk; but I replied that the site of the Temple of Venus must be an exceptionally fortunate spot, and one must risk something. So while I was on the Mountain his father resharpened the point of the coral and he gave it back to me this morning.

"You must wear it round your neck on a chain," said Pietro, "or a piece of string will do."

Here we were interrupted by a young man who brought his girl to buy a ring. She was accompanied by her maid, dressed in black and with a shawl over her head. The girl already wore a ring and also a pendant and chain. No business was done. The girl had a ruthless nostril and was difficult. I was sorry for the young man; but I remembered the cockchafer that the contadino's children were teasing at Torre del Greco, and again did not feel myself called upon to intervene.

These two customers went off to see whether they could not do better at another jeweller's. Then there came three girls in light spotted muslin, with a youth and an old woman, who chose, or rather disputed about, various articles of jewellery. Before they had done, the girl with the ruthless nostril brought her young man back and interrupted the three girls by continuing her bargaining about her ring. It ended in her making the youth buy for a hundred and twenty francs the ring for which

Michele had originally asked a hundred and thirty, and which she had sworn she would have for not more than seventy-five.

"Do you know who she is?" asked Michele when they had gone.

I did not, and he could not tell me because he had to return to the three girls in spotted muslin, who had been waiting. Pietro, however, gave me the information:

"She is the second daughter of a rich man, and last year her elder sister flew away with an aeroplanist, and the family did not approve because the aeroplanist is a man with nothing. Her mother was so ill about it that she nearly died. But I don't think," added Pietro with a smile, "that her papa can have been really very angry, because when he was a young man he flew away several times with actresses and barmaids."

"Ah," said I, "but they don't like their daughters to fly away with young men."

"No," agreed Pietro, "perhaps not. You see the parents of daughters have no sympathetic dramatic instinct."

"I know what he ought to have done if he wanted to keep her."

"What?" inquired Pietro.

"Why, he ought to have worn a piece of your coral round his neck."

"He's a sceptic," said Pietro.

"Well," I said, "I won't be a sceptic; I'll be on the safe side."

"That's right. Now let me put it on for you at once. And don't you ever take it off again."

"Does Giovannino wear one?" I inquired.

"Always," said Giovannino; and he hauled up his string and displayed his coral hanging to it.

"And father?"

"Of course. Everybody wears one."

"But, I say Pietro, I may take it off to wash, mayn't I? A piece of damp string round my neck to begin the day with—most uncomfortable, you know."

"It is a risk," he replied, "but if you are quick, we will hope that it won't matter."

"I shall not feel really safe till you are demobilized and come to London to look after me yourself."

"I was with you on the tram," he said.

"Well, that thief didn't steal anything."

"No, but he cut your trousers. Don't you see—having the coral in your pocket protected you from being robbed, and, if it had been sharpened, it would have protected you from having your trousers cut."

All this time he was carrying out the operation of adjusting the string round my neck and dropping the coral down inside my shirt; and, as he was finishing, Federico came along. One is liable to meet Federico anywhere, for he is in the Pubblica Sicurezza and travels about exercising what he calls Vigilanza (Vigilance): that is, he is on the look out for violators of the law—thieves, smugglers and others, who may be carrying on their nefarious practices in the train.

I met him only the other day in Palermo and we went into a caffè in the Via Maqueda for a talk and a smoke.

"Oh yes," he said to me as we sat over our coffee, "it is not a bad life."

"Do you like so much travelling?" I inquired. "Isn't it fatiguing?"

"Not fatiguing, no. You see, criminals always travel

first class, and I am obliged to go where I shall be most likely to run across them. So it is pretty comfortable. Vigilanza, that is our motto."

"I understand. Rather lazy. Just suits you."

"Yes," he agreed. And he leant back in his seat with his head on one side against the wall and pretended to go to sleep. I wish you could have seen him with his eyes shut repeating the word "Vigilanza" in a dreamy tone.

When we met this morning in Trapani, he told me that he had arrived by the night train from Palermo. I said:

"I trust that you had a comfortable journey?"

"Not very," he replied.

"Vigilanza?" I inquired.

"Oh no," he said. "Too many mosquitoes—kept me awake all the time."

We wished him a better journey back, and he passed along.

We then went to another jeweller, to whom Peppino had given an order for a pair of diamond earrings which were to be a present for his fidanzata, Pia Luna. They were about as big as a sixpence: a large diamond in the middle with eight or nine smaller ones round it. They were finished, and we brought them away with us.

We took the earrings with us for Pia's approval in the afternoon when we went to the house of her mother and sisters where we generally spend our evenings. The young ladies are busy preparing the trousseau. The linen is, I suppose, lovely, and their embroidery most beautifully executed. They showed us an open-work bedspread which they were making, and which they said would take them two years to complete. There were napkins and towels with open-work ends to them, and things to put in the bottoms of trays, and on the tops of

footstools, and many more elegances. We admire it all every time we go, and sit there talking, fanning ourselves to keep off the mosquitoes, eating ices and sipping lemonade.

So you see I am leading a quiet and simple life among friends who are doing their best to look after me and make me comfortable. Don't forget to tell me your movements and

Believe me,
Your affectionate Compare,
ENRICO.

Chapter 41 Favignana

Casa Barrabini,
Trapani.
July 6, 1920.

My dear Compare Keith,

Our meeting in Italy does not seem likely to come off from what you say, but I am not going to give it up yet. I expect to be in Rome on my way back in about three weeks. I cannot say more definitely, because I must go to Castellinaria, and I do not know how long that will take. I will write again.

Now I want to tell you about what we did yesterday. It was Sunday, and we went for an excursion to Favignana, one of the Ægadean islands which are prominent in the view from Mount Eryx. Our host was Gustavo Ricevuto, a journalist of Trapani, who had some business in the island. We met on the quay and took the steamboat. The sea was perfectly calm, and we had a delightful voyage of an hour. When we arrived at the island, Gustavo's friends were on the pier expecting us. After introductions and greetings we went off to inspect the interesting objects of the town, and especially Florio's Tonnara—his establishment for catching, boiling and packing tunny fish. In our progress we gathered more friends and grew into a party of about a dozen. The tunny fishing was over for the year, nothing was going on

except the cleaning up ; but we saw enough to understand that Florio's establishment is the chief business of the place. They told us that a capital of five millions of lire is sunk in it, meaning pre-war lire. A million lire before the war used to represent about forty thousand pounds sterling, so that five million would have been two hundred thousand pounds sterling.

Favignana, like Pantelleria, that other island near Africa which Luigino and I saw from Mount Eryx, is a penal settlement, and the criminals are of two kinds : first, those who have committed some serious crime, such as murder, and these are confined in prisons ; secondly, those who have only committed minor delinquencies, but have been so diligent in wrongdoing that at last the authorities in weariness have condemned them to a term of banishment to the island. They live anywhere in the town and have their wives with them ; they are free all day, but must be in by 10 p.m. They are called coatti (Latin co-actus) and may do as they like except leave the island ; they actually do work for Florio when the tunny fishing is in full swing.

Seeing these coatti at home prompted Gustavo to tell us about a hotel at Castellinaria, which used to be a rowdy kind of place with a stage at one end of the dining-room on which ladies in elegant but insufficient attire performed Neapolitan canzonets during the evening. The directors of the hotel company disapproved, discharged the manager, and engaged another named Pasqualino who ran the hotel till his death. During Pasqualino's tenure nothing disreputable ever occurred ; the stage was removed, and the space occupied by blameless dining-tables ; no ladies were allowed unless accompanied by well-known gentlemen, and everything was as dull and

early-Victorian as it can be in a Sicilian hotel. "And this Pasqualino," said Gustavo in conclusion, "was a coatto who had served his time in Favignana." On Pasqualino's death the only manager they could get was a man without a stain upon his character, under whom the hotel returned to all its old vices.

As we were going along the street in Favignana one of these coatti approached us. He was very ragged, dirty and broken down. He began talking in what he considered to be English. I could not understand him, but he condescended to explain his meaning in dialect to those who were with me, and they told me in Italian that he had been in England, where he had had the misfortune to be put in jail. He had, however, favourably impressed "una lorda Inglese" ("lorda" was his notion of the feminine of the English word "lord"). She had fallen in love with him and used her influence to persuade the authorities to release him. So we gave him half a franc, which enabled us, after he had expressed his gratitude, to shake him off.

We were on our way to visit Florio's palazzo—an immense building, ugly outside but most comfortable inside. It was all ready to receive him, in case he should come with his family and friends; even the mosquito curtains were in place over the beds. The ground floor consists of the living rooms; the first floor of the bedrooms and bathrooms of the family; and the second floor is the forestería—that is, the bedrooms and bathrooms of the guests. All the second-floor bedrooms are numbered as in a hotel, and there is a lounge for the guests with a large table in the middle for papers and magazines. On the top of the house is a terrace. They told us there was another half a million of pre-war lire locked up in the

palazzo, and that the proprietor has not been near it for ten years.

It was now time for the meal which in France is called déjeuner, in England luncheon, and in Italy colazione. We went to an albergo and found that everything had been foreseen. In an upper room was a table laid for our party, and we took our seats. The hors-d'œuvres were sardines, slices of tomatoes, and so on, but no tunny, and, as tunny in oil is the chief product of the island, it seemed to me a topsyturvy kind of appropriateness that there should be none in Favignana. I ventured to point this out to Gaspare Bertolini, an accountant in Florio's office, who was sitting next me. I did not put it as a complaint; I said that I had heard of tunny in oil all my life, and had occasionally eaten it in restaurants in Italy, in France, and even in London; that I had understood that Florio's tunny was unsurpassed; and that now, being in Favignana, the place of origin of the most renowned tunny in the world, I had wondered whether it might fall to my lot to taste some. He accepted the compliment and immediately had the defect remedied, saying that they were so accustomed to tunny in oil that they did not consider it a food worth offering to visitors. I assured him that it was very much worth while and that it was the most delicious tunny I had ever eaten.

One of our party was particularly active in making things go. I had observed him before. While we were going round the tonnara we met the postman, who delivered a registered letter to him, and I understood that he was the sindaco, the mayor of the place. He was dressed in a suit of yellow khaki, and looked cool and comfortable; the colour of his clothes harmonized well with his sunburnt complexion. At luncheon he took it

upon himself to send away the first bottle of Marsala, not considering it good enough for us, and insisted on our having a bottle of another brand with which he filled our glasses ; and when more friends joined our party he fetched more chairs. I inquired of Gaspare Bertolini who he was, and he told me that he was the Prince of Spadafora. They have a story, which they tell as a first-class howler, about some visitor to the island who could not understand why the sindaco should be a prince.

" Because," they explained, " he has a property which gives him the title."

" Is it in the island ? "

" No ; his father came here. His grandfather was a Palermitan."

" Did the prince come from Palermo ? "

" No, he was born here."

" Oh, ah, I see now. He is the son of one of these criminals."

He was quite the brownest prince I ever lunched with, if I may imitate a remark attributed to Oscar Browning after he met Kaiser Wilhelm at Cambridge. The prince changed our plates and attended to our wants and looked after us most efficiently, not because he was not a real prince—I am sure he would have been aware of the smallest pea under any number of mattresses—but because, as sindaco, he intended that we should leave the island pleased with everything.

Presently, as it was Sunday, the bells began to jangle for service and intensified the uproar caused by our party, who were talking politics—my word ! didn't they talk politics ! It was all in dialect, and Gaspare told me that it was about introducing electric light into the island. It seems that Gustavo, our journalist host, is advocating

some scheme for having this done, and then—ah then! Favignana will be a first-rate town, because then, at last, it will have a cinematograph. Berto's brother-in-law, Cavaliere Coppola, the sindaco on Mount Eryx, had told me much the same thing up there. The castle on the Mountain is in two parts: one is Le Torri, which belongs now to the family of the late Conte Agostino Sieri Pepoli, and the other is used as a prison and belongs to the town. When I go to spend my promised month on Mount Eryx next year, I am to find the prisoners all lodged elsewhere, and the prison part of the castle turned into a casino with rooms devoted to various entertainments, including the cinematograph which will be a possible addition because by that time the electric light will have been established. Also he said that by next year a constant supply of water will have been laid on to the houses on the Mountain, which I should say will do more than even the cinema to increase the attractiveness of the place as a summer resort.

After luncheon we strolled through the town on our way to the pier to catch the boat back to Trapani. Gaspare and I walked together. He had a riding-whip, and because I said something about it he wished to give it to me; but I declined, not liking to deprive him of it. Afterwards I saw that I had made a mistake and said:

"Dear Gaspare, let me change my mind. Give me your riding-whip, and I will take it back with me to London and keep it as a ricordo of you and of the happy day we have spent together in Favignana."

He gave it to me at once. When I return I must send him some ricordo from London and you must help me to choose it. I am sure you would like him; he is a most friendly and kind person, and I only wish he did not live in such a remote and inaccessible place as Favignana.

Favignana

Our adieux were prolonged by our friends begging us to come again. They promised us all manner of entertainment. The boat goes and returns on Sundays and Thursdays, and the proposition was that we, or some of us, should go again next Thursday and stay till the following Sunday. We were offered all-night fishing, and serenades, and as much to eat and drink as ever we could manage—no difficulty about tunny in oil for hors-d'œuvres. And if we wanted to return before the Sunday there was always Florio's yacht which they could borrow, or some fishing-boat would take us. We had to promise, or we should have missed the steamer. But when I came to think it all over soberly and to make further inquiries, which I did on our way back, it appeared that Florio's yacht and the fishing-boat were interchangeable terms for the same vessel, and that if the wind was contrary the voyage might take three hours with oars; besides which, it is often rough. So I gave it up and now I must write an apologetic letter to Gaspare begging his forgiveness for the disappointment and promising to stay a week with him next year. I shall not enter upon the problem of why it will be easier in 1921 than in 1920 to stay for a week in Favignana.

Always your affectionate Compare,

ENRICO.

Chapter 42 Salt

Casa Barrabini,
Trapani.
July 11, 1920.

My dear Compare Keith,

I have heard from Castellinaria and am to go there to-morrow. I am not looking forward to my visit, because as I must have told you, my compare there, Peppino Pampalone, went to the war and was killed on the Carso. His widow, Brancaccia, wishes to see me and especially wishes me to see my godson Ricuzzu. It will be a painful experience, but I must go ; there are responsibilities which one cannot shirk. From Castellinaria I go to Palermo, and from there take the boat back to Naples where I may stay just to see Pietro again —if I can catch him, but his movements are controlled by the demobilization authorities ; he was only at home here on leave. Then I shall be at Rome rather sooner than I expected. I still hope we may meet somewhere in Italy, but if it is not to be, then I shall see you next when I come up to Cambridge after Christmas and find you in your new rooms in Trinity.

It was just as well we declined Gaspare's invitation, for if we had gone we should have been at sea during a scirocco. Of course no serious harm would have happened to me because I should have been wearing Pietro's

coral, but I am a bad sailor and should not have enjoyed the voyage. When I say that there was a scirocco, I mean that some one said there was; others said that there probably would be a scirocco next day; others that there had been one, but that it had passed now, and that the wind was tramontana. There was the wind all right, and it was pretty boisterous; I should say it was a scirocco and I generally can tell, for I am something of an expert and have made for myself a sciroccometer which is more trustworthy than the conflicting opinions of the natives. I herewith make you a present of it, it may be useful to you if you come south.

When the mosquitoes by night are more than usually sleepless, and the flies by day more than usually audacious; when the barbers' boys sit in their white jackets outside their shops waiting for the customers who are too listless to come to be shaved; when the ices deliquesce before you can eat them; when the salt is dry in the salt-cellar, and the half-teaspoonful of ink becomes a thin crust at the bottom of the ink-pot; when the young lady in the post office, or in the tobacco-shop where you go to buy stamps, won't give you any. "Stamps!" she says, lazily fanning herself, "why, you had stamps yesterday! What do you want with stamps again to-day? I haven't got any more. And besides, you must let some one else have a chance," and you go away crushed and wondering where the shop-people get the stamps, which, because of the scarcity of small money, they sometimes give you instead of change; then you may know that the scirocco is blowing.

They tell one that this wind starts in Africa and arrives in Sicily after travelling with tropical violence across the Mediterranean. One would expect it always to bring

with it the heat of the desert, but I have sometimes been told that the scirocco is blowing when the wind has seemed to me cold. This may be because it has the choice of two routes, high or low. If it travels high it arrives dry and perhaps cold. But if it travels low, then it arrives hot and full of salt moisture which it has picked up from the sea and which it deposits on one's lips, on the plants and flowers, and on everything else that comes in its way. Then it puts the post office young lady's hair out of curl, and makes the salt in the salt-cellar too damp, but it does not bring enough moisture to dilute the crusty ink back again into a useful fluid. One of these damp hot sciroccos began to blow one day when Butler and I were at Calatafimi years ago; we could not continue our sketches and had to come in. It was like being in the pathway of some illimitable hot-house which had gone mad and broken loose. The wind was still blowing next day, and we travelled through it to Trapani. It was still blowing on the third day, and we gave up trying to walk against it in the streets. After its three days it subsided, and Signor Giannitrapani, Peppino Barrabini's grandfather, took us to his garden and showed us his plants and shrubs all shrivelled up and looking as though scorched with fire. There is no dispute about its being a scirocco when it blows like this.

Whatever the wind was when we should have been between Trapani and Favignana, if we had gone again, it fell in due course; the weather reassumed its normal calm, and one day we received a verbal invitation from Ugo to go to an afternoon reception at his house in the Via Garibaldi in Trapani, he and his wife having by this time returned from their villeggiatura at Paparella. If cards of invitation had been sent out for this reception they

ought to have had in the corner neither "Music" nor "Dancing" nor any of the usual things but "Funeral." And just as at a reception with music the company is not bound to talk of musical subjects, but may discuss any matter, however irrelevant, until the specified entertainment begins, so we rather ignored funerals while we were waiting, and talked of anything that came into our heads. It was a crowded assembly, and included members of Ugo's family, and of his wife's family, all of them now my spiritual relations. They took the opportunity of thanking me for having saved Ugo's life by sending him parcels of food when he was a prisoner in Austria. There was nothing to thank me for so ceremoniously, because they paid for the parcels, and all I did was to give instructions and hand over the money to the Delegation of the Croce Rossa in London, who did the rest.

Our chattering was interrupted by sounds of approaching music, and we went out on the balcony. There was the funeral coming along the Via Garibaldi, the hearse, the bishop, acolytes, priests, candles, a brass band, and a following of a hundred or more complimentary carriages. It passed slowly beneath us, and was hardly out of sight before Ugo took Peppino and me off into another room and gave us afternoon tea. They do have regular receptions with tea as in London or Paris, but Ugo's tea was a compliment to England, as represented on this occasion by Peppino and me. He boiled the water over the gas-stove, and made the tea, and put in the milk, and produced what he called "una bionda tisana"—a blond tisane. And there were biscuits.

I said: "And now please tell me: Whose funeral have we been attending?"

And they told me all about it. Thirty years ago or so a

Trapanese gentleman, named Burgarella, took a lease from a British company of a tract of land near the sea at Aden. Being a native of Trapani he knew about salt-pans and saw what could be done with the land. He laid it out and started the works. The sea water is collected in large shallow pans open to the sun; it evaporates; the salt remains and is harvested, and there is always a market for it. This enterprising gentleman died soon after starting the works which he left to be carried on by his descendants, and they, since his death, have divided the net profits. I am afraid to say how much these amounted to before the war—I do not remember precisely—but it ran into millions. Let us say it was only three millions of lire; that, when the pound sterling was worth twenty-five lire, would be £120,000. During and since the war they have had in their payments from England the benefit of the exchange, so that their recent profits have reached a much higher amount per annum.

The family, they told me, had now brought their ancestor's body from Aden, nearly thirty years after his death; it landed on the quay a few days before. Money had been distributed in the town for the benefit of the poor, and we had just witnessed the passing along of the municipal funeral from the quay to the cemetery. They seemed to think it rather overdoing it to make so much of the body of a man who died nearly thirty years ago. But on the whole they settled that if a funeral is a good thing it is better late than never.

A few days afterwards I met Pietro's brother, Giovannino, in the town, and he took me to the cathedral where the religious memorial service was in progress. The church was all draped in black and white, and the organ was busy. I have never settled in my mind what

they do to their organs to make them emit the discordant sounds which one hears in Italian churches. The effect might perhaps be attained by tuning them in some mean-tone temperament, and then playing waltzes on them in the remoter keys, but I am not clear about it. Or perhaps it is only that they pull out too many mixtures. This is more baffling than some other questions that have arisen during my travels—questions that can be settled as soon as I get back to the British Museum. Or when I come to Cambridge after Christmas you might help me to look them up at Trinity ; and if the resources of your college are unequal to the demand, we can adjourn to the University Library. But I shall hardly know under what heading to look out the reason for the unpleasant-ness of the organs down here ; it may be that I shall have to make friends with some hardened Sicilian organist, and persuade him to tell me what they really do.

I have a great deal more to tell you, but cannot possibly write it now, for a reason which you would never guess. Yesterday Peppino and I went up on to the roof of his house, and from there I saw a view of Mount Eryx which took my fancy. I fetched my things and began a sketch at once. As I leave Trapani to-morrow I only have the rest of to-day and to-morrow morning. Now why couldn't Peppino have taken me up on to his roof a week ago ? He says he did—several times. Very well, then, why did I wait till yesterday to observe how fine the Mountain looks from there ? This makes another ques-tion to be added to those others which have to be looked up, and it resembles the one about the tuning of the organs in this, that a satisfactory answer will not easily be dug out of any library.

Please let me find a letter from you in Rome with your latest plans and dates, and in the meantime

Believe me,

Your affectionate Compare,

ENRICO.

Vignanova

To my Sister Lilian

Chapter 43 Old Friends

SOME years ago, when staying in Florence, I made the acquaintance of Tommaso Geraci who was established there in business. I was on my way south and he begged me, if I went anywhere near Vignanova, his native town in Sicily, to go and see his mother, his brothers and his sisters. The next time I went to Castellinaria, which is in the same province as Vignanova, neither of them being so marked on the map, I took the train and went over for the day. The family received me at once as an old friend, and I have never been treated with greater kindness anywhere. My experiences with them have shown me what can be meant by the expression about being killed with kindness. I went to see them whenever I was at Castellinaria, and the last time I was there, in 1913, before the war, I observed in the town a beautiful Arabian courtyard of which I regretted that I did not make a sketch. Being at Castellinaria again in 1920 I remembered the Geraci family and the courtyard, and thought that, if I went there for my usual day to salute the former, I might have time to make my sketch of the latter. I always in previous years had made my arrangements with Luigi, Tommaso's unmarried brother, who lived with the mother. So this year, according to custom, I wrote to Luigi, offering to come over. He replied, agreeing; the day was fixed, and I went.

On arriving at the station I recognized Luigi and his brother, Aurelio, who came to meet me, but I did not recognize the young man whom they brought with them. It seemed to me that I had never before seen those brown velvet eyes and that smile which displayed teeth like two rows of blanched almonds, though I guessed that their owner must be a nephew. He was Lorenzo, son of their sister Virginia, grown out of knowledge, and I had seen him in 1913. After the usual greetings we crowded into a carriage and drove to Luigi's house. I was put to rest on the sofa, the other three sitting opposite me.

"At last!" said Aurelio, "and after five years!"

"After seven years, Aurelio," I replied, correcting him.

"Seven years, is it? And you look just the same. Lo stesso."

"Stessissimo," said Luigi solemnly, "not a day older."

I returned the compliment, and Aurelio went away saying he had some business to attend to. I asked Lorenzo how old he was now. He replied that he was seventeen.

I said, "Then you were only ten when last we met. And what are you doing now?"

He replied that he was working in a draper's shop, where he will remain until it is time for him to do his military service; after which everything is uncertain.

"Do you remember our drive?" he asked.

I had forgotten it, but now remembered how I had taken him for a drive the last time I was at Vignanova. And I remembered further that I had done this in order to escape from the maze of compliments and kindness in which I found myself involved on that occasion.

"Oh yes," I said, "I remember it perfectly well." And I fancied I detected something like a wink in

Lorenzo's eye. This suspicion was confirmed by his subsequent behaviour, and I began to see our drive together as bread which I had cast upon the waters and which was returning to me after many days.

Here Uncle Luigi interrupted our reminiscences by proposing to show me my room ; and he took me into a bedroom prepared for me.

" But my dear Luigi," I said, " I've only come for the day. I must return to Castellinaria to-night."

" No, no. You will stay for a week. Now that my adorata mamma has become a saint in Heaven I have a house of my own. I can put you up and you will not disappoint me."

We settled it without quarrelling, and it was agreed that I might be let off this time ; but I had to promise to stay a week next year. He then inquired whether I should like some immediate refreshment after my journey. I asked what time we were to have luncheon.

" We shall dine presently," he replied.

" Yes, Luigi dear, thank you. But about when ? "

" We shall dine when dinner is ready," he said.

So as it was about half-past eleven and there were no signs of any preparations I said that I should like some immediate refreshment. The house was unequal to it, and we had to adjourn to a caffè in the Piazza del Duomo where he ordered three coffees. Lorenzo looked at me critically with a repetition of that suspicion of a wink, spoke two supplementary words in dialect to the waiter, rubbed the palms of his hands together and sat silent. The waiter went behind the bar, took a large cup, turned his back to us and did something—I could not see what —but it seemed to involve a prolonged repetition of Lorenzo's gesture. Then he arranged his tray with cups

and biscuits and brought it to us. He gave Luigi and Lorenzo a small cup each. To me he gave the large cup which already contained something frothy and a wooden implement. He poured coffee into the little cups and then filled up mine while Lorenzo turned the implement. Luigi looked surprised, as though saying to himself, "Well, that boy! you never know what he will do next." What he had done this time was to draw his own conclusions as to my powers of endurance, and to act upon them by telling the waiter that I was to have a couple of raw eggs twisted up into my coffee.

We then went to the house of Virginia, Lorenzo's mother, Luigi explaining to me as we walked along that as his adorata mamma had not yet been dead six months the ladies of the family could not go out; but they might receive me in their houses. When we got near the door Lorenzo shouted to me:

"Mind your head!"

I ducked and saved my hat.

The houses at Vignanova are nearly all of the same design. Each one is built round a courtyard with stairs open to the court. They are let in floors and the door of each set of apartments opens on to the landing. They tell one that this is the form of the Arabian house, and my Arabian courtyard is a particularly beautiful example of it.

We went up the stairs, knocked at a door, and were received by Lorenzo's father and mother. I was put to sit on the sofa in the place of honour; the others grouped themselves round, Virginia, her husband, two girls, Luigi and Lorenzo.

"At last," said Virginia with a sigh, "and after five years!"

"After seven years," I replied, correcting her.

"Seven years, is it? And you look just the same. Lo stesso."

"Stessissimo," said Luigi solemnly, "not a day older."

Then one of the girls brought a tray of glasses, papa filled them with the family liqueur, which they call rosolio, and we drank each other's healths. Virginia asked after my sister. Papa inquired how long it takes to travel from London to Vignanova, and whether one comes all the way by sea; and I was beginning to wonder what was going to happen next when suddenly Lorenzo exclaimed:

"Iamuninni!"

I was ready to take the hint, if it can be called a hint—for this word, "Iamuninni," is Sicilian for "Andiamocene," and means "Let us now go"—but no one moved. I put my trust in Lorenzo, however, feeling sure that that boy would never have thrown "Iamuninni" into the assembly as one throws a stone into a pond; he must be going to follow it up.

There came a few more questions about our perpetual fog in London, and whether it ever rains in the summer, and at last we reached the great, inevitable, final question whether I intended to return to London all in one journey or by degrees, stopping at different places by the way; they are most particular about this, and I always try to satisfy their curiosity punctiliously. On this occasion, while I was doing my best to state my information in a new form, Lorenzo cut me short, and justified my faith in him by catching my eye, winking again, nodding his head and rising. Farewell salutes followed, and we went out into the sun.

I was taken next to the house of the other sister, Rosina,

who is a widow, and received by her, her daughter, Maria, her son, Carlino, and his wife. Carlino has been in the army ; as soon as the war was over and he was demobilized he married. We all sat round as before.

" At last," exclaimed Rosina, smiling at me, " and after five years ! "

" After seven years," I corrected.

" Seven years, is it ? So it is. And you look just the same. Lo stesso."

" Stessissimo," said Luigi solemnly, " not a day older."

Here the glasses came out and we were served with something which had peppermint in it, and Lorenzo produced cigarettes. Carlino then began to tell us about his experiences during the war, and his wife and mother looked proud of him. First he went to Palermo, then to Messina, then to—and so on. They all give me a list of the places they went to while on service, but Giovannino was the first who told me that he had been to London. He said that London was the finest city in the world, finer than any other city ; he did not care what the other city was, it might be Vienna or Paris or New York, that did not matter, London was finer than any of them. In London he lived near the theatre. He could not tell me which theatre and, indeed, seemed surprised to hear that we have more than one in London ; nor could he tell me the name of the street, but it was a street many kilometres long, and in any town in Sicily it would be called Corso Vittorio Emanuele ; he did not care which town in Sicily —Palermo, Siracusa, Caltanissetta—such a street would be called Corso Vittorio Emanuele. He had also been to Vienna, Paris and Trieste ; and to all these places he went for the same reason, namely, because he was in the cavalry, which appeared to me insufficient, but it brought

him to his subject—the Italian cavalry, the finest in the world, finer than that of any other nation, he did not care what the other nation might be—English, nix; French, nix; German, nix.

"And were you never wounded, Carlino?" I asked.

"Never. Shall I tell you why? Because we Sicilians do not know fear."

I thought of Sir Galahad in Tennyson's poem which we read at school:

> My good blade carves the casques of men,
> My tough lance thrusteth sure,
> My strength is as the strength of ten,
> Because my heart is pure.

On this one of my schoolfellows used to comment, "I do not dispute that Sir Galahad's heart was pure. I reserve, however, the right to form my own opinion as to the taste which permitted the inclusion of the remark in an autobiographical statement. Nor do I dispute that his strength was as the strength of ten. If so, however, it must have been not for the reason he gives but because he was ten times as strong as any one man. That would work out right. Probably he intended to say, 'Besides' instead of 'Because.' I should have had no objection to his being irrelevant, but he ought not to be illogical."

Similarly with Carlino. I believed that he was not wounded; if he had had a wound he certainly would have wanted to show it to me; but the reason for his having none must have been that the missiles went another way. Like Sir Galahad, he ought to have said "Besides" instead of "Because."

"I was never wounded. Besides we Sicilians do not know fear."

And he cannot have been right in saying that he went

to all those places he spoke of " because " he was in the cavalry. Some other Sicilian soldiers must have been to some of those towns besides the cavalry. He delivered his words : " We Sicilians do not know fear " as the paladins deliver their speeches in the teatrino, and I said to myself : " This may be patriotism, but it is patriotism gone mad. I don't believe he ever went near the front. He is very ready with his words, but I don't believe he has ever been outside Vignanova. It is only talk. The readiness is all."

Maria had left us to proceed with her bread-making in a back room and I was beginning to think that Carlino's reminiscences ought to be bringing us near the Armistice when suddenly Lorenzo, who either thought so too or read my thoughts, again exclaimed :

" Iamuninni."

" With pleasure," I replied ; but again no move was made. It was only a preliminary announcement as before, meaning that a change was imminent. It led directly to the questions about my journey and my proposed return. Lorenzo caught my eye, winked, nodded, rose and we went.

We took a stroll to the Villa, that is the Municipal Garden where the band plays on Sundays, Thursdays and festas, and whence there is a view over the sea. We deplored the heat and agreed that, with the sea so near, it was fresher than in the town ; and gradually we wandered back. While we went along Luigi proposed, as though it were a new idea :

" Shall we visit the family of Alessandro ? "

I had foreseen that this would have to be done and now understood that it was not a new idea—that we had been to the Villa merely to waste time. While we were

in the houses of his mother and his aunt that sympathetic Lorenzo had hurried on the performance of the programme. We ought to have gone to Alessandro's family immediately after Rosina, but we were in advance. I regretted the waste of precious moments during which I might have got a window or some corner of my Arabian courtyard, but I was as powerless as a man going over Niagara. We strolled back to a house which we had just passed, went in at the porte-cochère (" Mind your head," shouted Lorenzo again), upstairs to the second floor and knocked. A woman in a night-gown opened the door slightly, looked at us, and apologetically saying : " One moment " disappeared, shutting the door again. " Still too soon," I said to myself. It was a strange feeling, because it is seldom that one is too soon in Sicily. For instance, my train that morning ought to have started at 8.20 ; it did not have to come from anywhere, Castellinaria was the terminus, but it was not ready, the engine had to be mended first and we did not start till 9.40. It made up some of the time on the journey and arrived at Vignanova only one hour late.

The woman who had opened the door was Nina, Alessandro's wife ; she now appeared again, properly dressed, with the last baby, aged eight months, and let us in. We sat round a table this time. Alessandro's eldest daughter, Adriana, the second of his six children, is a girl of Lorenzo's age, seventeen, of quite extraordinary beauty. Her face is of the pointed oval type, pale, with a perfect nose, and the nose is where these beauties sometimes fail ; black eyes ; long, full, black eyebrows ; quantities of black hair arranged as for a festa ; and a friendly, happy, contented smile like sunshine after rain.

During my reception some one disappeared with

instructions mysteriously given in dialect. Lorenzo unostentatiously rebuttoned one of my shirt cuffs which had become unfastened without my observing it ; and he did it without asking permission or saying " Excuse me," as though it was his department to look after me. The lovely girl brought a tray of glasses. While they were being filled I heard sounds as of some one approaching from the floor below, and a magnificent lady in a pale blue muslin dressing-gown, with lots of buttons, burst into the room.

" At last," exclaimed this personage, taking my hand ; " And after five years ! "

" After seven years, dear Lady," I replied, correcting her.

" Seven years, is it ? " said she. " And you look just the same. Lo stesso."

" Stessissimo," said Luigi solemnly, " not a day older."

While we drank our rosolio we talked about one of my previous visits when we all went for a picnic in the country. I was glad the conversation took this turn because I was thereby reminded that this overwhelming creature was the sister of Nina, and also the owner of the house to which we went for our picnic. I regret to say that I had forgotten her ; perhaps the fresh young beauty of her niece had destroyed my memory of her matronly charms. She now led the conversation, asked all the proper questions about my journey, and displayed intelligent interest in the population of London, almost weeping when she referred to the perpetual fog in which we live. Nina did not say much, she was occupied with the baby. Lorenzo perfectly understood that it was a pleasure to me to gaze upon the beauty of his cousin Adriana, and delayed his exclamation of " Iamuninni " until I had begun to

fear he was overdoing it and that we should be turned out. However, all ended well and we got away without trouble.

As we went along in the sun I wondered what was coming next, and whether I should not soon be too hungry to sketch even a part of a doorway, and we wandered off down a road which had not yet been taken by the parish and arrived at a stabilimento, a great courtyard with a well and fig-trees, a rambling vine and shady cloisters. Here we found Alessandro himself with a towel round his neck being shaved. "Too soon again," I thought, but perhaps not, and anyhow it did not matter. His reception of me was mixed. In the first place, he was overwhelmed with joy to see me again.

"At last," said Alessandro, "and after five years."

"After seven years, Alessandro," said I, correcting him.

"Seven years, is it?" he replied. "And you look just the same. Lo stesso."

"Stessissimo," said Luigi solemnly, "not a day older."

That was all very well, but when Alessandro understood that I was going back to Castellinaria that evening he was quite cross, that is he appeared to be. Of course he was only acting, but he did it so well that I felt bound to repeat my promise to Luigi and to say I would stay for a week next year. So I was forgiven, and he sent a man off to a dark alcove in the cloister to fetch some vermouth. There was no sofa in the stabilimento and I was put on an ordinary chair. I told Alessandro that we had been to salute his family and congratulated him upon his daughter Adriana. He received my compliment as though it was the first he had heard of her being anything unusual; but politely, as though he remembered that there is no

accounting for tastes. I suppose this is the correct behaviour for fathers, but if I had such a daughter I should not be able to conceal my pride and delight in her beauty.

While we were talking and drinking our vermouth a small dog strolled across the doorway.

"Come here, Fritz," said Lorenzo.

And Fritz obediently came in.

"Eat a piece of bread, Fritz," said Lorenzo, holding out a piece to him.

And Fritz ate the bread.

"Drink some wine, Fritz," said Lorenzo, offering him his glass.

And Fritz wouldn't touch it; he turned away, went out and continued his stroll.

They told me that when Fritz was a puppy he one day drank some wine and it made him drunk; he was so much disgusted with the result that they have never been able to persuade him to touch wine since.

The absence of a sofa made no difference to the questions about the journey; they were the same, including the final question about whether I was proposing to return all in one unbroken journey, or with stoppages. This interview was concluded not by Lorenzo's exclamation but by Luigi's leaving us, and saying that it was dinner-time. I looked at my watch and wondered how it was that I felt so well in my inside notwithstanding that it was 4.15 and I had been existing since dinner last night on coffee, two eggs, rosolio, peppermint and vermouth. The pain of parting with Alessandro was alleviated by his remark that, although I was returning to Castellinaria that evening, nevertheless we should meet again before the train started. Lorenzo took my arm and conducted me with extreme care, perhaps thinking

that I was faint, back to Luigi's house where we found that things were moving. Luigi was not visible. I supposed he might be superintending, and hoped he was hurrying the preparations for the dinner. At five o'clock he brought Aurelio into the room and also Aurelio's daughter who had come for the day and was the person who had been superintending the preparations. She said that all was ready. Lorenzo went home to his own dinner and we adjourned to the dining-room. Dinner was on the lines of the normal Sicilian dinner, spaghetti—that is, thin macaroni—with tomato sauce and melanzane, which we call egg-fruit or aubergines, sliced and fried ; fish, with apologies for there being no meat in the town to-day and only this inferior kind of fish, and it was not at all inferior ; chicken stewed in tomato sauce ; and cakes with all sorts of things in them, including almond paste, jam and sugar ; Marsala to drink and coffee afterwards. Knowing the customs and that a room had been prepared for me, I said I should like to repose, and was shown into my bedroom. It may be that I had eaten too much, but then I had waited a long time for it ; anyhow I took off my shoes, lay down on the bed and slept until Lorenzo came bringing back my shoes which he had purloined without my being aware of it. They were only dusty, as it does not rain during the summer ; so, not having much to do to them, he had put in new laces. He said it was past seven and time to get up ; we were, I imagined, nearing the next item on the programme.

I got ready and we went to the piazza, and sat outside the club under the portico where Alessandro found us, as promised. He brought with him his son Michele, a youth a year or two older than his beautiful daughter. We did not see him at the house nor in the stabilimento

because he is engaged in business during the daytime. He, like his cousin Carlino, had been through the war and also in the cavalry and gave us some of his experiences. First, he went to Palermo, then to this town, then to that, and so on. What I liked best was his showing us how the Italian cavalry worked. To see Michele killing an Austrian would be a valuable lesson in gesture to any one capable of profiting by it. We were all sitting round eating ices and smoking cigarettes, and quite a crowd of friends and neighbours collected while he went through his performance. First he glared at his enemy, then held his lance in rest, then glared at him again ; then, with a noise like tearing calico, he plunged his lance into him ; at the same moment he enharmonically became the Austrian, his tongue lolled out, he uttered guttural sounds, his eyes dilated, his head fell back. He was not like Georges in Paris, he had no objection to killing people. Nor had he any more objection to repeating his gestures than his cousin had to repeating his swagger. He must have polished off a dozen Austrians at least for our benefit ; and I was so pleased with him that I did not notice that my cigarette had gone out till Lorenzo relighted it for me.

After Michele's reminiscences I was introduced to some of the friends who had collected round us, and they all duly inquired how long it was since last I was in Vignanova, how long it takes to travel from London to Sicily, and whether, when I returned, I intended to make the journey all in one or to divide it by stopping now and then on the way.

Then we sent a joint post-card to Tommaso in Florence to tell him how much we had enjoyed our day together and to show him that we had been thinking of him.

After which I was taken to the station. The train, unlike my train in the morning, was punctual. It came at 22.35 and delivered me at Castellinaria at 23.20. They told me that sometimes it is late—so late as not to arrive at Castellinaria till six the next morning. If we had had to spend five or six hours waiting in the station I wonder whether Lorenzo's resources would have been equal to the strain. Mine would not.

And my sketch of the Arabian courtyard? This chapter is all I have to offer, and it must do duty till next year when I return and spend the promised week with Luigi in his house.

Palermo

To Sebastian Sprott

Chapter 44 Carmelo

IT was Saturday morning in Palermo, and I had made arrangements to leave next day in the steamboat for Naples. Ambling along the Via Maqueda, I left the shade and was crossing a broad open piazza when a young man rushed out of the darkness of a caffè and embraced me in the midst of the sunshine. It was Carmelo. Giovanni Grasso with his Sicilian Dramatic Company, including Carmelo, had crossed from Naples in the night and was to open that evening with *Feudalismo*. Carmelo took me back to his caffè, gave me a cup of coffee, and introduced me to his father-in-law, who, after saying that he had heard of me, took this opportunity of consulting me about the future prospects of his brother who went to the war and served as cook in the Croce Rossa Italiana; there he made the acquaintance of a number of English officers who all thought very highly of him both as a man and as a cook.

"And you must know," said Carmelo's father-in-law, "that my brother is excellent in both capacities; indeed, it would be difficult to determine whether he is more excellent as the one or as the other."

I was wanting to talk to Carmelo, to hear what had been happening to him and to all the members of the company, how long he had been married, how many children he had, and what was now his position. But no.

We must proceed with the man-cook. The point was this : could not I, as an Englishman, exert myself to find in London for Carmelo's father-in-law's brother some position worthy of his great talents ?

I protested that, although I prefer to have my food properly cooked, nevertheless, whatever Carmelo might have said about me, I have but little practical knowledge of cooking. I can make toast and boil an egg ; but my roasting of meat and frying of fish would hardly go down. and as for made dishes—I should not know what to make them of.

No, no, that was not necessary. He wanted me to find some employment. It would be a great thing for his brother to be established in London. Surely I could see that !

I saw that, but had no idea how to bring it to pass.

" Surely you must have friends who are in want of cooks ? "

" So I have—ladies. And they generally object to risking the loss of the fare to London and back of a cook who proposes to come from, say, Devonshire to be interviewed. What would be the fare from Palermo to London and back in case my lady friends did not come to terms with your brother ? "

Carmelo's father-in-law did not know, nor did I.

" But why," I proceeded, " should not your brother apply to some of those English officers who have already had experience of his gifts and who think so highly of him both as a man and as a cook ? "

" Ah there ! That is just it. Unfortunately my brother did not have the activity of mind to think of asking any of them for his name and address."

I saw no more of Carmelo's father-in-law after that

confession, and came to the conclusion that my inspiration about his brother's officer friends had saved me.

Carmelo hailed a victoria, and we drove to the next street, where the theatre was. Sicilians walk as little as possible ; in the summer the heat is not merely excessive, that could be stood for a time, it is continuous, day and night, and this persistence is what gives it the victory.

We entered the theatre by the stage door and found Carmelo's wife and baby, a girl a few months old named Checchina. I gave her my keys to play with, and Carmelo said :

" Oh don't do that, she'll only put them into her mouth."

I replied " Yes, I know. I always give babies my keys, and they always put them into their mouths."

So I gave Checchina my keys, and she put them into her mouth, and took them out, shook them, laughed at them, and put them into her mouth again while we talked about things in general. Carmelo is now the macchinista to the company, which means that he sets the scenery. He has two assistants, who were already at work on *Feudalismo* for the evening, and presently we joined them on the stage. Carmelo gave me a chair and attended to his work.

I kept on thinking of Checchina and my keys. I wonder why it is, I said to myself, that the Holy Child never puts into his mouth the shining boxes and vases offered to him by the Three Kings in the pictures of the Adoration of the Magi ? He must have done so in real life ; but I do not remember to have seen him doing so in any picture. If the artists are right, then when King Melchiorre, we will say, returned home and went to bed

that night, a conversation on the following lines must have taken place :

King Melchiorre. "You remember, my love, that golden vase encrusted with jewels ? Well, I opened it to show the frankincense you had packed so neatly inside——"

The Queen. "I didn't pack it myself, I got Collins to do that ; she is a capital packer—one of the best I've ever had. But go on."

King Melchiorre. "Well, I offered the lid to the baby to play with. He looked at it and seemed pleased with the jewels ; he held out both hands, but he did not take it."

The Queen. "Not take it ? But didn't he put it into his mouth ? "

King Melchiorre. "No, he did not even touch it."

The Queen. "What a remarkable Baby ! All our children always put everything into their mouths. There must be something unusual about this Child ; I've said so all along—ever since we saw his star in the East."

King Melchiorre. "My dear, we didn't. We saw his star in the West ; we were in the East."

The Queen. "Well, isn't that what I said ? We in the East saw his star."

King Melchiorre. "Oh that's what you mean ! It's rather an involved way of putting it, isn't it ? "

The Queen. "Of course, if you're going to be disagreeable—What is the matter with you ? Your outing doesn't seem to have done you much good."

And so on—leading to one of those lovers' quarrels which, with their redintegrations, do so much, if I have been correctly informed, to relieve the tedium of enforced monogamy.

Of course Melchiorre and his queen had not yet realized what had actually happened at Bethlehem, or they would not have talked like that. But I think that no such conversation can have taken place because the Baby must have put the things into his mouth; and the painters were not allowed to say so because the conventions for pictures of the Adoration were dictated by the priests, who, of course, were unmarried. Still they need not have been such unobservant old bachelors.

And Carmelo and his men went on hammering, and the scenery for *Feudalismo* went on taking shape. The background was finished—the interior of a mill with bags of flour on the floor, sieves hanging up, and implements lying about. There was a grille through which Giovanni, as Vanni the Shepherd, was to look, and a practicable door through which he was to burst and conclude the last act by punishing the perfidy of the cavaliere. He does this by holding him down, forcing his head back, and biting his throat till you see the blood come. But it is not really blood. It is the cavaliere's red tie which he has been wearing all the evening, and you did not notice it till the action puts blood into your mind, and you believe for the moment that it has just begun to flow.

Another opening appeared in the background with a turn to the right, so that it made an alcove. There comes an emotional moment in the play when Vanni and his wife, Rosina, are having supper—or rather, are sitting at the supper-table; the strain is too great for them to eat; they have just become aware of the facts of the situation. Vanni bursts into tears and cannot bear to be seen crying at table; he staggers off to the alcove and falls on the floor in a heap, with his back to the audience, heaving and sobbing and breaking his heart. One evening, when

they were doing the play in London, I was behind, close to the exit from the alcove, hidden from the audience, but Giovanni, whose face was turned away from them, saw me. He smiled at me through his tears, nodded his head, winked, and said "Buona sera, Enrico!" all the time continuing his throbs and the heaving of his shoulders.

I thought of *Le Paradoxe sur le Comédien*, and of how the author labours his point that the actor does not really experience the emotion he portrays, until long after the reader has wished to stop him by exclaiming: "The Court is with you, Monsieur Diderot."

And still Carmelo and his men went on nailing and nailing, leaning finished bits of scenery up against the wall out of their way, and hammering and hammering again; and people came in and interrupted with messages, and we sent off messages in reply; and the mosquitoes began to be troublesome; and it got to be nearly five o'clock. Soon the work was finished, and Carmelo took me round to the entrance and left me in the room of the door-keeper, whose wife was mending linen, and Carmelo's wife was helping her, while Checchina lay asleep in the middle of an enormous bed with my keys still grasped in her hand. Here he left me while he went and took off his overalls and cleaned himself. Presently he returned, we detached my keys and proceeded to dinner.

Chapter 45 *Feudalismo*

WE returned to the theatre for the evening performance and found ourselves in the midst of all the company. I had seen none of them since last they were in London before the war, and, as they had not all come to London, there were some whom I had not seen for a still longer time. Carmelo stood by me, and if I did not remember the name of any of them, he prompted me. The children had grown up, and of course I did not recognize them ; they were now acting with the rest. In the midst of them was Giovanni. As soon as he saw me he shouted :

" Ah, Enrico ! Bravo ! "

He came up to me, put his two hands on my shoulders and said :

" The four quarters of the globe are five in number, and they are the three following :—Enrico, Giovanni."

I replied : " Bravo, Giovanni. You have not forgotten our supper under the stars."

" Giovanni can never forget his brother Enrico. And for how long are you here ? "

" I leave to-morrow for Naples."

" But you are coming to see me play to-night ? "

" I intended to leave Palermo last Wednesday, but I saw the notices in the town : ' On Saturday the Commendatore Giovanni Grasso——' "

"Oh come, come! Drop the Commendatore. For you I am always 'Giovanni.'"

I began afresh.

"I saw the notices announcing that my dear brother Giovanni with his Sicilian Dramatic Company would open on Saturday with *Feudalismo*. How could I leave on Wednesday? How could I leave without coming to see you once more as Vanni?"

"Thank you! thank you!"

Then he turned to the company and shouted to all who might be within hearing:

"This is Enrico, and he is as free to come in and go out and return again as any other member of the company."

But this does not include my having a seat, because the acting company and the management of the theatre are not the same. If I want a seat among the audience, I go to the box-office and buy one like any member of the public. Thinking I should like to see Giovanni from the front, as I had not seen him for so long, I went to the place where tickets were being sold. There was a crowd, and it appeared hopeless to expect to get through. Nevertheless in some mysterious way I had no difficulty in getting absorbed among the strugglers, and in an unexpectedly short time was interviewing the man. I took what he handed to me and paid a lira and a half. All I bought, however, was a ticket giving me the right to enter the theatre, which Giovanni had already given me gratis. The ticket man had nothing more to sell; the seats were all disposed of. I turned and found that there was still a crowd; it had closed up behind me, and I was confronted with the difficulty of getting out through it. A voice shouted: "Let the gentleman pass. Don't you see he wants to get out?" "Very kind," I thought;

and again, mysteriously the crowd let me through. I had not gone ten paces before I seemed to be waking from a dream and was impelled, automatically, as the natural thing to do, to ascertain whether that pocket-book, which the Neapolitan tram-car thief had failed to steal, was still in that back pocket of my trousers. It was gone. The Palermitan thief had not cut my trousers ; he had just abstracted the book. " No good doing anything," I said to myself. I had not looked at the people round me, and should never have recognized any one. Fortunately there was no money in the pocket-book—only my diary to date, a few appointments for the rest of the year, some addresses, cards and photographs such as one accumulates on a journey, and rough statements of accounts. " I shall want some of those addresses," I said to myself. " And those accounts, though they are incomplete and so confusing that I don't understand them myself. If the thief can make anything of them, I hope he will communicate the result to me, even if he does not restore the book. After all, it is the diary that matters most."

I have kept a diary nearly all my life—only three or four lines a day, but I have come to rely on it ; it is my memory. The only time I was ever robbed before was in my own native London, just after the war had begun and before all the pickpockets had joined up. Iago says : " Who steals my purse steals trash " ; but that depends upon how much there is in it at the time, and my purse had about three pounds in it when that pickpocket stole it. If Iago intended us to understand that, however much money his purse had in it, money is, after all, filthy lucre—dirt—then he was anticipating the ingenious man who defined dirt as matter out of place, money being usually in some one else's possession. But (to continue

in the Iago manner) he that filches from me my good memory for more than half a year robs me of that which not enriches him and makes me poor indeed. And this Palermitan pickpocket had robbed me of the slipperiest part of my memory, for as one grows older one remembers most vividly the things that happened years ago and forgets most easily the things that happened yesterday. This had often appeared to me disputable ; I now began to realize its truth, though I did not suppose that by to-morrow I should have forgotten the loss of my pocket-book.

In the meantime I kept on repeating to myself : " No good doing anything ; and especially I must not tell Giovanni ; it would be like accusing his managers. Naples ought to have been a lesson to me ; but some people will never learn."

By this time I was back behind the scenes again and had found Carmelo, who having no part in the play was free to talk to me. Besides talking to Carmelo, I had to attend to *Feudalismo*, and to observe as much as I could of the acting through any cracks which he and his men had left in their scenery. But I was too much pre-occupied by my loss to give proper attention to the play. I must not tell Giovanni. That, however, was no reason for not telling Carmelo, and I wanted to tell some one. So I told Carmelo.

" You take it very easily," said he. " Why don't you curse the whole island and all its inhabitants ? "

" Why should I ? " I replied. " These things happen in every country ; pickpockets are like microbes, always about ; one can take precautions, but no one is safe. It was my own fault. I, an obvious Englishman—you've only got to look at my clothes, as the buffo said—go,

practically carrying my pocket-book on the end of a fork, into one of the most likely crowds in the city and shut my eyes ; naturally some one takes it."

" Well, if you put it like that ; but——"

" Besides," I continued. " Why curse the island and all its inhabitants ? The logical attitude is not to blaspheme but to be thankful that there was no money in it."

Then it flashed into my head that this was the third loss, first the railway ticket in Paris, then my watch in the train, now my pocket-book which St. Antoine had saved for me in Naples. I suppose he thought he had done enough. I began to tell Carmelo about my misfortunes when another thing flashed into my head—I was not wearing Pietro's coral ! I had taken it off to wash that morning, and had left it in my room at the hotel. I couldn't make such a confession to Carmelo, nor to any Sicilian ; and especially I must never let Pietro suspect.

My mind was so occupied with this disturbing reflection that I did not hear what Carmelo was saying, though I was dimly aware that he was talking. I now turned my attention to him :

" We might try S. Antonio," he was saying. " But this is a robbery, which is not quite in his line. It's not the same thing as an ordinary loss."

Then an idea struck me. " Will the police help ? " I asked.

" The police ! " said Carmelo with contempt. " The Mafia, if you like."

" I have not the honour of the acquaintance of any Mafioso."

Carmelo was silent.

I said : " Do you think that S. Antonio is in league with the Mafia, and if I go to his altar, tell him all about

it, and offer him twenty francs, he will do the rest ? "

" You can try," said Carmelo.

" I shall not have time ; I leave for Naples to-morrow evening."

" We shall be here for a month," said Carmelo. " I'll do what I can for you."

And so, hoping for the best, I left him.

Chapter 46 Addio Buffo

SUNDAY morning came, and there was not so much to do as I had thought when talking to Carmelo; after I had bought my ticket by the night boat for Naples and finished my packing, I only had to take leave of the buffo. I went to the marionette theatre and found him preparing for the first performance.

"I'm going away this evening, Buffo, and I've come to say good-bye."

"You will miss a great deal. Orlando has now killed Don Chiaro and is on his way——"

"I cannot wait for it. I am very sorry. I have something to tell you before you tell me any more about the story. You know I cannot go on coming to Palermo every year for ever. There must be a time which will be the last, and it may turn out to be this time. I am only sixty-nine as yet, but . . ."

He interrupted me: "So that by tuning your mandoline a little sharp, you can almost say that you have already attained the three-score years and ten which people talk about."

"That's it. Not that I am thinking of dying just yet, there are several things I want to do first, but you know . . ."

"I know. Few people live to be ninety, and even if you succeed in living another twenty years you will be

getting feeble before you've done it, and everything will be more difficult."

"Just what I was going to say. Now the process of getting old is the process of lightening the ship—of throwing overboard those things which life has taught us are not indispensable. Putting aside abnormal people . . ."

He interrupted me again: "What is the matter with you? You never talked like this before."

"I have had a warning."

"Oh, well, if it comes to that, I've had a warning. Several warnings. You cannot go through all that fighting, and be wounded twice, and nearly have your leg off without feeling that you've had a warning. And I'm only half your age."

"By the by, Buffo; why didn't they amputate your leg? I'm very glad they didn't; but what was the reason?"

"Because I would not let them. You had promised to come to Palermo again after the war, and I thought to myself: 'If I have my leg off, Enrico will say "Where is my buffo? That is only part of him come to meet me; where is the rest of him?"'"

"That was quite right of you, Buffo. But I hope that keeping it on is not much trouble to you."

"It does hurt sometimes. But I was going to tell you —Besides those warnings, I've had another. Last night Malagigi appeared to me."

"What! Malagigi, the Emperor of Magic?"

"Yes; the cousin of Rinaldo."

"He died in a grotto in Asia, and I saw his skeleton rattle up out of his tomb and give his posthumous instructions to Guido Santo and Argantino."

"That's right. Well, Malagigi appeared to me last night in a dream and said: 'Enrico will come to-morrow to salute you for the last time. Be prepared.' I might try to make things easier for both of us by saying that I am sure you will return to Palermo and see Monte Pellegrino again next year, but after what Malagigi said last night, and after what you have just said, I do not like to do so."

"Perhaps he only meant the last time for this journey, not the last time for ever."

"Perhaps. That's the worst of these magicians and dream people; they are so fond of leaving loopholes."

"Anyhow we can hope that I shall come, and I will try and stay longer, and we will make another 'Escape from Paris' together next time, won't we?"

"You have not been so long as usual this year. Which day did you arrive?"

"I do not know. Oh, yes, I do. I can just remember. The day you met me on the steamer was June 15. But you must be careful how you ask me questions like that, because I am losing my memory. That is what I wanted to tell you. You know, when one loses one's memory, it is the beginning of the end."

"Nonsense. Your memory is all right."

"It has begun to go. Try asking me the birthdays of the Royal Family. Or, look here, ask me how many eclipses we have already had this year, and how many more are due before December 31, and which are visible and which invisible at Greenwich, and you'll find I cannot tell you. This time yesterday I could have told you in about half a minute—also the rates of postage, foreign as well as inland. But not now."

"This is getting serious," said the buffo sympathetic-

ally. "It is the inability to remember things like this that turns one's hair grey before its time. Now, if you were one of the paladins, I should know what to do about it."

"What should you do?"

"Send Astolfo to fetch back your lost memory from the moon, as he fetched back the lost wits of Orlando."

"It is most awfully good of you, Buffo, and I wish you would. It may save him from falling a victim to the wiles of some sorceress disguised as a pilgrim. And what with that, and Carmelo's talking to S. Antonio, I shouldn't wonder—Oh, yes, and the Mafia—why, I shouldn't wonder if I found my pocket-book waiting for me as soon as I get home."

"Now what is this? What is all this about Carmelo, and S. Antonio, and pocket-books, and the Mafia?"

Then I realized that I had not yet told him specifically what had happened in Giovanni's theatre the preceding evening.

"I am very sorry about this," he said, when he had heard my story.

"There is some hope, and you are probably doing all that can be done. I will send Astolfo to the moon this very evening. And Carmelo will be visiting S. Antonio. But he must not make any mistake and go to the wrong one."

"Are there two?"

"Certainly. He must not go to S. Antonio in the Desert. He had temptations and goes about with a pig; he is no use for recovering lost property. He must pray to S. Antonio of Padua."

"What does he go about with?"

"With the Child Christ on one arm and a lily in his other hand. He'll find anything for you."

And I began to wonder whether perhaps Georges had gone to the wrong one in Paris; if so that would explain his failure with my losses.

"I must warn Carmelo," I said. "I'll send him a post-card before the boat starts this evening. These double saints make traps for us poor ignorant believers."

"Yes," he agreed, "it's like calling up the wrong number on the telephone."

"Anyhow," I said, "there is always the Mafia. Do you suppose that Carmelo will be able to do anything there?"

"It's your best chance; he is just the sort of person to work it. You see, these thieves meet together and share their plunder. When your thief shows that he has only got papers—no money—he might perhaps give up the pocket-book for a recompense."

"Who is he to give it up to? Carmelo?"

"Carmelo may be able to manage something. He is more likely to succeed with the Mafia than with S. Antonio."

"If anything comes of all this," I said, "if I ever do recover my pocket-book memory, I shall take it as a sign that I am not so old as I sometimes feel—or rather that I am not so near the end as I sometimes fancy. And if nothing comes of it, then, whenever it shall please the Padre Eterno to complete the work begun last night by that thief in the theatre——"

"Ah, but when the Padre Eterno does that, he will take with your memory the power of grizzling over the loss of it."

"So he will, Buffo. That is a comforting reflection.

But what I was going to say is that with the last remnant of my memory I shall be thinking of . . ."

"Stop," he said, laying his two hands on my shoulders as Giovanni does when he wants to be impressive, "I know what you were going to say, and you need not say it. I know that as long as you remember anything, you will remember me; and you know that it is the same with me—as long as I remember anything, I shall remember you."

"You are quite right, Buffo; but it is a satisfaction sometimes to put into words an idea that is floating in one's brain. And this, now I think of it, is what you have just done instead of letting me do it."

"It is what all artists are doing all the time," he replied. "It is what you are doing when you write your books about your travels."

"Yes, and it is what you are doing in the teatrino."

So we both laid our hands on each other's shoulders again, embraced in the Sicilian manner, and parted—to meet again? Who knows?

Postscript

Carmelo to Enrico.

PALERMO, *August*, 1920.

MY DEAREST ENRICO,

It is now some time since I had the pleasure of writing to you. I am quite well and hope that you also are enjoying good health. I often think of the happy time we spent together in Palmero, and of all we said to one another, and of all we did together; and I look forward to the day when I shall next see you—perhaps in London,

when the company comes there again, which ought not to be very far in the future.

I spoke of the loss of your pocket-book to a friend of mine who knows some of the Mafiosi. He told me that he was present at the meeting when the thief who stole your pocket-book produced it to the others. None of them would believe what he said. They accused him of having taken the money out. There was a fight, and your thief was wounded. He was so angry about being wounded for doing his duty and for speaking the truth that he revenged himself by burning your pocket-book. So you will never see it again ; but you have the satisfaction of knowing that he was punished, for he was wounded rather severely.

We leave Palermo to-morrow. I will write to you again as soon as I can, and if we go to America, I will bring you back a ricordo from that country.

My wife, my mother-in-law, my father-in-law, and Checchina, all wish to be remembered to you, and I am always your affectionate friend

CARMELO.

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